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HOME WHISPERS.

TO

Husbands and Wives.

BY MELVA.

SWETTEST names to mortals given,
Father, Mother, Home and Heaven,
Husband, Wife. To live—how dear,
Were these banished from our sphere!
Cherish, guard, and ever prize
Life's most sacred, tender ties.

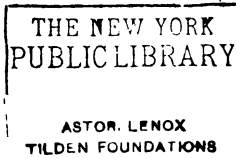
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NEITHER ambition of literary notoriety nor pride of authorship, has suggested the publication of "HOME WHISPERS."

In response to many calls for them, in a collected form, they are here offered, with the desire that they may carry with them suggestions tending to correct faults or encourage virtues in the homes they may visit.

To the forty-three thousand subscribers to "THE ADVOCATE AND GUARDIAN," whose kind and flattering reception of these "Whispers," has given them voice far beyond their merits; also to those Husbands and Wives who would fain harmonize discordant homes, or culture into higher moral beauty already happy ones, this volume is affectionately dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

HOME WHISPERS



PART I.

TO HUSBANDS AND FATHERS.

HOME WHISPERS.

PART I.

TO HUSBANDS AND FATHERS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"DOMESTIC happiness ! thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall !
Though few now taste thee unimpaired and free,
Or, tasting, long enjoy thee ; too infirm
Or too *incautious* to preserve thy sweets,
Unmixed with drops of bitter."—COWPER.

WOMAN's sphere—her influence—her domestic obligations and duties, have long formed trite themes for many an essay, sermon and tale. How long have the pulpit, the press, the teachings of society and public sentiment, enforced the sacred obligations which rest upon her, to make the homes of men, over which she may preside, Eden-retreats from the turmoils and perplexities of man's outer life—retreats, where his soiled and ruffled garment of care and annoyance may be exchanged for the robe of comfort and repose.

How oft, and how feelingly is she reminded

that "trifles make the sum of human things," and therefore she should ever be a wakeful sentinel upon the watch-tower of domestic life, guarding from the intrusion of malign and disturbing influences, the sacred hearth-stone.

It is well the daughters of Eve should thus be taught their duty, to soothe man's troubled spirit, to smooth his care-worn brow, and to brighten his rough and toilsome path-way, with those gentle ministrations, heroic forbearances, and that unflinching love and service, which render them "helps meet for him." I will not attempt to add either suggestions or instructions to woman on this worn theme. But, assured that her brother man has been too much overlooked in suggestive hints on domestic education, I would claim his attention to some of those "trifles," which "make the sum of" *woman's* life, and which carry their influence into the domestic circle no less impressively than those so frequently urged upon her consideration, and which have their own weighty influence in the comforts and discomforts of home. May the *whispers*, though faint, reach the ear of some husbands, whom custom and teaching have educated to the belief, (even against the suggestions of their better natures,) that the smiles and sympathies, the forbearances, little attentions and services, which should be as golden candlesticks around the home altar, are to

emanate exclusively from woman, while they have but to warm and comfort themselves by these cheerful love-lights. Shielded behind the reputation of "good husbands," and in the consciousness of aiming to be such, a suspicion may never have intruded, for a moment, of their merits to the title in its largest and fullest import. House, food, raiment, all the comforts and appliances of life may have been freely and lavishly bestowed, and yet what is more prized by true womanhood, withheld—namely, sympathy, attention, consideration, in life's daily wearying cares and duties, and in its smaller trials. Start not in disgust lest it be asked of you to concede to her an untried and unwomanly sphere of action, or to relinquish to her the scepter of legal and social supremacy, which, amid the agitations and conventions of the day, you now grasp so feebly. Let other pens plead for woman the impracticable, the visionary, the ambitious—the *extension* of her sphere, and the *augmentation* of her duties and burthens. Be mine the humbler task of asking a *lightening* of her toils, some mitigation of her cares, more economy in the draughts made upon her strength and nervous energy, the outpouring of sustaining sympathy and considerate help in her multiform, wearing and exhausting duties. My plea is for woman—as housekeeper, mother, wife, nurse and

teacher ; for her who is the mainspring in the home machinery—whose morning labors press hard upon the footsteps of noonday toil—whose nameless cares accumulate as the shadows of evening invite man to repose—refreshment for her whose it is to respond to the multiform demands of home and hospitality, of children and society—who keeps midnight vigils with restless and sickly childhood, while “nature’s sweet restorer” is renovating man’s muscles and nerves for less onerous duties. I would plead for frail, sickly, care-worn mothers, who, all over the length and breadth of our country, are yearly dropping by thousands silently, mournfully, into premature graves, ere the first flush of maturity has passed from their brows—and I would whisper this plea in *his* ear, who is oftentimes slow to learn her value, but in the bitter experience of her loss, when his motherless ones call in vain for her ministrations, and he mourns in bitterness that those priceless services and energies were no more carefully *husbanded*.

The great Hungarian orator says, “The petty pangs of small daily cares have often bent the character of man.” Thrice often have they that of woman, and bent her form, and robbed her cheeks of their youthful bloom before life’s noon, deprived her spirits of their freshness, and her heart of its ardor. Far more wronged has she

been by man's inaptitude to sympathy, and his inattention to the *real wants* of her nature, and to what he may deem *little things*, than by a denial of co-equality with him in the public walks of life—more crushed by unalleviated cares than by the iron heel of his despotism.

Far be it from the writer to plead for woman an exemption from the toils, earnest labors and stern self-denials of those, who, with faces heavenward, tread the checkered and thorny pathway of an earthly pilgrimage. But is it the design of Providence that she should be as burthened with the cares of family and children as she is? or that she should so early droop, and fade, and pass away, leaving those cares and burthens to others? Is there not much that is wrong—first in physical training, and next in the exactions and claims of society and family; much neglect and short-sightedness in the family's legal and constituted head? His was a *wise policy* as well as a thoughtful affection, who every year took his wife from the confinement and cares of a large family, sparing neither pains nor expense to provide temporary care-takers for the little ones, and leaving his large and pressing business, traveled with her to remote and various places of interest, improvement and beauty; cheering, entertaining and drawing out both mind and affections, then returning her to her home,

refreshed in body and mind, composed and invigorated in nervous energy, exhilarated and rejuvenated—so that she could perform her life-work more effectually and thoroughly. When asked how he could *afford to leave his business*, he replied, “I cannot *afford to have my wife wear out*.” When complained of for depriving his children of maternal care, he said, “They had better miss that care a few weeks in the year, than be deprived of it during whole years of a motherless life.” All cannot do as he did, but all can emulate his spirit and apply his principles of sound economy in such ways as Providence may place within their reach.

MAN AS WELL AS WOMAN NEEDS TO BE EDUCATED
FOR DOMESTIC LIFE.

Many noble, conscientious mothers are aiming thus to train and educate their daughters; are they equally zealous in this department of education for their sons? Here and there, *one* perhaps, but the great mass are well satisfied if they are successful in training their sons for honor and usefulness in the social walks of life. Many a family of boys have been trained to enterprise and stern integrity in business, to be men upon whom the church and society could safely lean, men whose shrewdness and forecast may be felt like electrical currents through the ramifications

of business and enterprise, but who are not good husbands in the highest and most home-felt sense of the term—who do not know how to catch sunbeams of sympathy and joy, and diffuse them through the family abode. They are men who would yield both sympathy and attention to wife or child under the pressure of a *great* trouble—but who have no eye to see, no ear to hear the elfin forms and sorrowing tones of a whole retinue of smaller ones. This inaptitude, ignorance, or thoughtlessness of the smaller duties, courtesies, and sympathies of life, is partly O man! thy misfortune, and partly thy sin.

* * * * *

The somber shades of evening have succeeded an autumnal twilight, and thy steps are turned from the busy mart homeward. A cheerful fire, an inviting supper, a gladdening song, arm-chair, slippers, and a favorite author, conspire to produce oblivion of the cares of the outer-world, in the delights of home. The ministering spirit of the household hushes the noisy mirth of little ones, to procure quiet for thee. One by one they go to their slumbers, and she, performing the last of her round of active duties, hastens, with needle in hand and the delightful anticipation of quiet *for herself*, to a seat by your side. But the book is more interesting than is the entertaining of a weary, jaded wife, and she soon

relinquishes the vain attempt to induce conversation. Perhaps thou art ruffled in spirit and wearied in body, and she ministers to and soothes thee with sympathies which have been poured out all day to exhaustion, till she longs, O how vainly and wearily, *to be ministered to*. Thou wearied man, with the sinewy frame and powerful muscles, with thy "large, firm brain," and thy well-strung nerves, thou who art so exhausted in spirits—upon whose nerves grate so harshly the noise and disturbances of children, what thinkest thou of her who sits beside thee, with slender frame and feeble nervous organization, who has "from morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve" hastened from duty to duty with no thought of rest, amid the fretfulness of infancy, the perversity of older children, and the unfaithfulness and ignorance of domestics? She has perhaps scarce found time to pen uninterruptedly a line to an absent friend, or read a chapter of Holy Writ. Her moment of holy converse with her God in the secret chamber may even have been invaded by a startling cry which denoted an accident in the nursery. Perchance thine eye discovers something out of place, something marred by the destructiveness of little ones, and the wonder falls from thy lips in impatient tones, why such things are allowed in a well-regulated family. The cloud of care may

rest ominously upon *her* brow, in the light of whose smiles thou wouldst brighten thine own. Perhaps the eyes through which her spirit looks forth upon its earthly lot at the close of this wearied day, are dim with the moisture of an ill-defined and unexpressed sadness. Are those tears drops of bitterness to thee, *repelling* rather than drawing forth thy soothing inquiries and tender solicitude? Art thou willing to minister to her spirit, even as thou wouldst she should to thine?—to seek to know the burthen which oppresses her, and if beyond thy power of removal, to lend thine own superior strength to assist in sustaining it? Art thou willing to lay aside the entertaining paper or book, to render her what assistance she may need from thee, or to interest her with the news from the out-door world, or thy gleanings from the public press? “I am where I was, in information, when I first became a mother,” said a pale wife of thirty, “for I never get time to read now, and my husband, though a great reader, and constantly making acquirements, does not *like* to read aloud, and while he progresses I must retrograde.”

Whoever thou art that hast assumed the responsibility of life-companionship with woman,—not “as she should be,” but “as she is,”—a sacred trust is thine, which material wealth alone, or the provision of physical comforts will never

enable thee to meet. If thou wouldst make less effort to lighten a care or remove a spirit-sorrow—if thou art more indifferent to her complaints, her burthens or her infirmities, or adaptest thyself less to the necessities of her inner being as a husband, than when thou wast wooing her, from the bright home of parental love, to one beneath thy roof-tree—then hast thou weighed lightly the import of a marriage-vow, or thou art recreant to thy plighted love. She whom thou feedest with the husks of a *fine establishment* or a *negative* kindness, may learn to satisfy her heart-cravings with something short of what her wifely heart or womanly nature demands. She may learn the stern lesson of an unnatural self-reliance, but it will be at a cost all too dear for thee.

But let us return to the arm-chair and parlor. Thy wife essays in vain to induce conversation, or draw attention from the book; so, with one foot upon the cradle of the sleeping infant she plies her stitches in silent rumination, long after thou hast sought thy pillow. There she sits, weary in body and lonely in mind, straining her aching eyes to darn with neatness the rent in thy coat, to replace missing buttons and strings, or close great gaps in little ones' apparel. The outcry of the babe, restless from the process of dentition or some other infantile ill, now and

then partially arouses you, and you wonder what your wife can find to do so late, or why she does not teach the child good habits. But you are soon dreaming of stocks and bonds, of ships and merchandise, of briefs and clients, and weaving ambitious schemes in fairy-land. You do not like to see any garment out of order, or children untidy; you often say, if you had nothing to do but stay in the house and take care of children, they should always be tidy and orderly. So the needle flies till the last rent and wear of the day is repaired, or the new and much-needed little garment is completed. With a last inspection of the house to see that all is safe, and a visit to the beds of her sleeping treasures, she takes the restless infant on her arm, and seeks the couch of slumber. Perhaps she muses for a while upon the failures of the day as a mother, wishes you shared more fully in parental responsibilities, longs to have you interest yourself more in Eddie's character, and adapt yourself more to his shrinking, sensitive disposition; wishes you would make less of a plaything of Lizzie, curb and restrain her forwardness, or aid in arousing Willie's dormant faculties and subduing his self-will. So she sinks to an oft-interrupted slumber, to dream of time for the claims of society, friends and the sick out of her own family. While she wanders in dreams over the field of domestic

cares, and thou amid the wilder ones of ambition and business, let me pen a history for thee, one of many garnered in memory's storehouse, illustrative of woman's lot. It may prove suggestive, though it fail to be interesting. Other histories there are, written in ineffaceable lines upon heart-tablets—histories to be gathered all along the great domestic highway, where woman leaves her foot-print, from the decorated hall of opulence to the humble home of her who sits beside her rough hearth-stone in the rude cabin of a western clearing, even down to her who quails in want and rags beneath the blows of imbruted man, in some city's den of misery. Let us lift the curtain from these various grades of domestic life—let us bend our ear attentively and catch, if we can, the key-note of over-burthened womanhood's song.

CHAPTER II.

MARY.

"THE patient, perfect women ! As they climb,
With bleeding feet, the flinty crags of time,
Not for the praise of man or earth's renown,
They bear the cross and wear the martyr's crown."

WM. A. BUTLER.

THERE was a bright and gentle being who walked with me the flowery path of childhood—who wove with me the bright garlands of youth ; whom I followed with ever-increasing love and admiration into the more shadowy walks of maturity, and traveled with, in congenial companionship, even down to the borders of "the valley of the shadow of death." Her name was Mary ; that name immortalized in Bethlehem, ages since—the name *she* bore, whose arms of maternal love encircled Him, who, cradled in a manger, was yet earth's moral light, beaming divinely over the hill-tops of Judea, and glancing and sparkling along her valleys. It was the name which poets ever since have loved to weave with their tenderest lays, and which falls gently on the ear as some old strain of house-

hold music. Her name and character harmonized. Trained by a devoted mother, in a school where early adversity taught stern but wholesome lessons, she knew how to go out of self and sympathize with and live for others. Her slender, feeble frame, suffering from wrong *physical* education, enshrined a loving, pure and beautiful mind, one that had early been baptized by the Spirit of grace and truth. When she was married, many a heartfelt wish was uttered that so fair a flower might find congenial culture. She settled in the city of my adoption, and commenced life in her "own home," with comfort and competence. An unselfish thoughtfulness of others, in little as well as greater matters, was her peculiar characteristic. The genuine spirit of old-fashioned hospitality pervaded her new home. As she arranged it and set in motion the machinery of domestic comfort, with the taste, order and system of a well-regulated mind, and breathed over it the love and joy of a noble and Christ-like spirit, before his mind who called her wife, there arose visions of Eden bliss all too bright for earth. He never sought his home, but the sunshine of comfort and a soul-elevating cheerfulness greeted him. He loved to bring his friends to sit at his board and share the refined hospitality of his home. There, many a wearied servant of God found frequent rest and *spirit*

refreshment. The stranger and sojourner rested beneath that roof; and there, also, did many an outcast and wanderer, clothed in the garments of filth and poverty, find temporary shelter, listen to gentle tones, loving instruction and wholesome advice, exchange the garments of shame for those of decency, and go forth to the walks of *useful labor* with the elevating consciousness that they were of the great human brotherhood. Many were the draughts made upon her, by society, church, friends and strangers, consuming time and strength, so that it required some perseverance to give that attention to reading and mental culture which she often sternly resolved should not be thus easily relinquished. Time passed and other cares were added, even the paramount and most sacred ones of maternity. Pecuniary reverses also came, not startling and bitter, to call out the great heroism of woman's heart, but such as made necessary a rigid and wise economy—such as oppressed the provider of the household with anxieties and forebodings, and nerved its gentler head to sacrifices and home-efforts hitherto unknown. The eighth anniversary of her marriage found Mary occupying a less-convenient house than at first, with the *same amount* of domestic assistance—namely, “one maid of all work,” and six olive-plants about her table.

But, had not the wail of infancy shut out the voice of the wanderer who stood at her gate? Had she not in her ministrations to the wants of young beings, become forgetful to entertain strangers, though they might not *always* be "*angel-visitors*," but often *covetous ones*, who sought the *convenience* of her hospitality to save the contents of their purse at a public house? No; hers was still a hospitable home, hers still a cheerful welcome, though it was often with weary steps and jaded spirits she sought the "prophet's chamber," to see that all was comfortable for an unexpected guest. But surely, fewer drafts for domestic comfort, and yearly-increasing assistance, and consideration in maternal toils, was rendered by him who was her other self. Alas! though he was by no means a man who "lived to eat," or who would have willingly been made "comfortable" at an unreasonable cost, he was yet one to whom the material comforts of life were by no means unimportant ones, and he had been educated to the belief that the world, the *business world*, was *man's* theater of action, home *his* place for quiet rest and enjoyment. Their lightened purse and restricted means only urged her to greater ingenuity and effort, that it might not be felt in *his* home comforts. He had so gradually become accustomed to the augmentation of her cares,

and they were met with so placid and uncomplaining a spirit, that he hardly suspected hers was a less-favored or more-wearied lot than it was when he first called her his. True, labors which he would then have remonstrated against her attempting, were now unnoticed, though they were, to the aggregate of what she performed, as the "small dust of the balance." Many a silver thread had been traced by the hand of care, rather than of time, among her dark locks. But she was still young *to him*, though friends said, "How faded and care-worn Mary looks." She shed over his home and upon his heart a light and warmth which he was but too willing quietly to enjoy. He ever had a warm and quiet nook in which to chat with a friend or commune with an author. His wardrobe and meals ever evinced the accuracy and system of the mind which regulated them. On her calm and thoughtful brow, in the midst of her little group, and in the lute-like tenderness of her tones, as she regulated and instructed them, might be read the estimate she set upon her calling, and her daily recognition of the inspired text, "No man liveth unto himself." And hers was a high and holy calling. Such is woman's *highest*, to be the mother and guide of the young heirs of immortal life. But who that has not felt it, may know the weariness, the soul-

discouragements, the heart-faintings and physical drafts made upon her, who in addition to her oversight of the household, bears the burthen of infancy and childhood? Who shall measure the patience and love which sustain, through its various ills, and its watchful and restless nights? The care-worn look, the absence of elastic spirits, the gradual lessening of interest in social and intellectual life, betoken the over-taxed frame and exhausted mind. But he who should have seen and known and shared it all, often congratulated himself upon Mary's increased strength and capacity for endurance, acquired amid the cares of a family. So satisfied was he with her government and training of the children, that he unquestioningly left it almost entirely to her. She often wondered if she was growing more selfish, more self-indulgent, or declining in energy, that life and its cares seemed so burthensome to her, that she shrank so from the comers and goers and from little extra burthens. She queried if her mode of living was not wrong, and her management defective, that she was so pressed, always, with labors and cares. Sometimes, when striving to quiet the evening cry of infancy, that her husband might enjoy an uninterrupted chat with a friend in the parlor, or anxiously contriving a comfortable breakfast or lodging for an unexpected guest, or assisting a

•

wearied domestic (whose brow was lowering darkly at the addition of company,) to finish the labors of the day, she was forced to feel, despite her gentleness and charity, that woman's "lot" was often but that of an upper and responsible servant in the family.

Stopping a few weeks in the country, adjacent to my city home, one summer, I received a letter from which I make a few extracts, to show what Mary's cares and labors were, and what are the burthens multitudes of feeble mothers bear throughout the length and breadth of our fair land. Theorists sometimes wonder why our American housekeepers are no more intellectual.

Dear —: I have tried for many weeks to find a little leisure in which to write you. I now sit with my foot upon the cradle of our youngest boy, who is coming down with measles, while little S—— is tossing upon the bed under the full influence of the disease. I had hoped to escape from the dust and heat of the city, before I was obliged to house myself, but just as I was ready, with my children, my trunks all packed, the family of a returned missionary came to spend a fortnight with me, bringing four children with them. The mother, an early friend of mine, was much worn with service in a foreign land, herself and children were exhausted with their long sea-voyage, and I felt it to be a

privilege to do all in my power for their comfort. One of her dear children sickened and died while they were here. The day after they left, my faithful domestic scalded her foot, and for some days I was too busy to go out to find some one to supply her place. She was just beginning to assume her duties in the family, when an old acquaintance came, for the first time for many years, from the Far West, with her family to revisit our city, and stopped with us. The intermittent of the West was developed by a change of climate, and the whole family were more or less under its influence. * * * You know I have never had quite my usual vigor since my siege with the children last winter, through the whooping cough. It was a severe tax to attend upon so many through the long, cold nights. I was up as often as every hour or half hour through the night, all winter, sometimes all needing my attention nearly simultaneously. Dear Edward *tried* to help me, but he *wakes* with so much difficulty and so slowly that I generally attend upon the children myself, when they need attention in the night. It does not seem easy or natural for fathers to charge their minds with the care of children in sleeping hours. I, too, was once a sound sleeper, but it was *long ago*; now, if I sleep, "my heart waketh."

I sometimes fear my time and strength are not wisely improved, but I seem to be forced along to do what *must be done*, and I leave undone such things as I *can* neglect. I *would* be hospitable in the true and Bible sense of the term, both because it is right, and because it gives my husband so much pleasure to have friends at his table. I would be a cheerful, profitable companion, an efficient and faithful mother, cultivating my own, and my children's and household's higher nature; nor would I confine my labors to my own family circle, but labor for and bless those without. But where shall I find the time, where the strength for all this? Oh! I am so jaded, so pressed by these multiplied cares night and day, so encompassed with infirmities, that I long sometimes to flee away to the calm and quiet region where they dwell, who have wiped off the dust of earthly toil, laid down the weapons of their warfare and entered into the rest of the holy. * * * * *

Soon after the reception of this letter I received a hasty summons to the city—and to Mary's bedside. As I entered her dwelling the shadow of the grave seemed to fall upon my spirit. I hastened to her chamber, where the feeble wail of a new-born infant told me that another had been added to her seven heart-treasures. But when I looked upon the face of the pale mother,

I saw that *her* love and care would enfold her dear ones as a vesture *no more*. I saw that the toilsome journey of the traveler was almost ended—that the laboring bark was rounding the last point, ere it anchored in the haven of rest. A few hours after, we closed those loving eyes and straightened those toil-worn limbs in their last repose. We adjusted those glossy locks, damp with the dew of death, over that high, calm forehead, where intellect and benevolence so sweetly blended.

Neighbors and friends soothed the wailing of the helpless stranger and ministered to the children who in vain called for their mother. The stricken husband locked himself in his desolate chamber, overpowered by his agony; and bereavement and sorrow settled like a dark pall upon the household. As through that long night of anguish, I watched alternately by the bed-side of a sick child, over whom she had spent her last life-energies, by the new-born infant, and the cold clay of the peaceful sleeper, her dying words were sounding continually in my ear, “How blessed the thought of sinless, everlasting *rest*—but who, when I am gone, will comfort my husband? Who, O, who will give a mother’s care to my little ones?” As ever and anon the stifled sob fell upon my ear as I passed the chamber where the strong man wrestled with his

widowed agony, I involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh, why this waste? Is it His design who cannot err, that the young mother should thus fall, in the noontide of her loving labors, into a premature grave? Who shall teach her the *limit* of her domestic duties? Who shall show man the *full measure* of his? Who shall make him to understand that his interest and duty alike prompt the lightening of her maternal and domestic cares, by serviceable attentions—the enlivenment, by healthful relaxation and wholesome variety of her labors, the value of whose ministrations are oftentimes most fully learned by their sudden and sad withdrawal?

In a few days a long funeral train wound its way to the "city of the dead." Sincere were the tears of sorrowing affection and mournful regret that fell, as our Mary's precious dust was laid in its narrow home. The heart of friendship and Christian sympathy was touched by the sight of the stricken mourner and his motherless children, and many a sojourner, in the city of her earthly abode, dropped a tear as the clods of the valley rattled upon her coffin-lid. I, too, wept—but *not for Mary*, for I knew that to her "death was gain." I felt that her weary feet had safely forded the overflowing waters, and were planted on the everlasting hills. I knew that the harrowing cares of earth no more should leave their

stain upon her immortal vestment. No more should the wings of her spirit droop in their glorious flight, or be pinioned by flesh and sin. No longer should the rugged path of duty be hedged with doubts or difficulties. I knew that she had gone where the intellect and affections should forever expatiate, *unfettered*—where her benevolent, loving heart, so stern in its own scrutiny, so gentle in its judgment of others, had received a new life, where it might forever revel in the luxury of holy service, without weariness or fainting. Methought I could almost catch the notes of welcome which greeted her in those realms, where their song is, "Victory!"—that I could almost, with a spirit's ken, discern her glorified form among the company of the white-robed ones, reclining in holy rest on the banks of that river which flows through the city of our God," and catch the glow of that face, radiant with immortal youth, as she communed with pure and lofty intelligences, or listened to the anthem of eternity. Oh! I wept *not* for the *departed*, but I *did weep* for those motherless ones, who were to be scattered far and wide—some to the care of mercenary hirelings, some to that of falsely-indulgent friends, and some to encounter in all the warm out-gushings of childhood's affections, the cold breath of indifference and neglect. And I wept for him who was so sorely smitten—

whose light of life had departed—for him upon whom now must devolve double duty, double care, with no one whose counsels and prayers and presence would be sunlight, and strength, and comfort in his darkened home. I felt a deep, sad sympathy for that mourner, as I bethought me of those *graver memories* that would mingle with the delightful ones of the departed, as he should question his inmost manhood of the faithfulness with which he had fulfilled that covenant to “love and *cherish*.” Though he was an affectionate husband, I knew he would often in his heart-scrutiny write against himself, with bitterness of spirit too, “*Wanting*.” I knew that often he would think of wearied days and wakeful nights—and how like thorns in his pillow would be their remembrance—in which, though the stronger of the two, he had shared no care or burthen. I knew how the echo of sad and discouraged tones, unheeded and unnoticed, that were unintended and *unconscious* appeals for sympathy, would haunt him in many a silent and desolate hour. I knew also, how long, and sadly, and vainly he must wander, ere he could find another like our lost one, to brighten his home and fold his little ones beneath the wing of maternal love—one where his own heart might repose with every demand of taste and affection responded to. How *could I* otherwise than

weep? I wept, too, for the poor and houseless, who always found a loving shelter with her, though others were "full"—for those who so constantly received from her that larger and more genuine charity than the gift of money, though it may be less chronicled and admired.

Years passed, before that father gathered together the scattered remnants of his once-happy family. Some had been gathered by "the reaper," to the great harvest of the dead. Some had suffered morally and physically from injudicious care, and to some "the lines had fallen in pleasant places." One stood at last by his side, worthy in heart and mind to occupy the place of the departed. As the husband gazed upon his re-united household, tearful remembrances of the past mingled with new plans for the future, for he had learned from the sore chastisements of Heaven, to be a *wiser* and a *better husband*.

Reader, if *thou* needst to learn such lessons, mayst thou learn in a more *timely* and a less *costly* way.

CHAPTER III.

AGNES—THE LOST ONE.

“BUT one had wilder woe
For a fair face long ago
Lost in the darker depths of a great town.”

Go with him whose mission is to the city's outcast, through this narrow, foetid alley, down those tottering stairs, into that miserable basement. Start not back in fear, though you may shudder at its filth and dampness, for its rude and riotous inhabitants have gone their various ways for a few hours, and left, as its sole occupant, Death and his victim. Approach this dark corner. The few rays of light which straggle through a begrimed and cobwebbed window, reveal a pitiful wreck of humanity, alone, in the last fearful struggle with the dread, inexorable conqueror, to whose mandate the rich and the poor—the sorrow-laden and the joyous, alike bow in resistless obedience. A few filthy rags form the dying bed—a faded, tattered garment the only covering of the loathsome tenement which will soon be food for worms. Yet the immortal

spirit there enshrined—trembling, fluttering, loth to leave the poor dissolving body, where vice and woe long since placed their signet—that spirit, vainly turning in the deep darkness which surrounds it for one ray of hope or mercy, is priceless as that of earth's proudest one, who dies amid the surroundings of a regal palace.

Will you whisper in that dying ear some promise of Jehovah on which it may stay itself amid the swelling waters? Will you breathe the soft accents of redeeming love? Would you utter that name which is the watch-word of the Holy, amid the shadows of the dark valley? 'Tis all in vain—too late. That ear is forever closed to earthly sounds. It hears only the portentous mutterings of coming retribution. Messenger of the Cross, thou hast heard the last confession those lips shall utter—hast delivered thy last message. There is naught for thee to do in this appalling abode, where crime and forsaken virtue have left their victim to drink the last and bitterest dregs from a poisoned cup—naught but to stand in solemn awe till life's last flickering ember shall have gone out in death's uncheered darkness. * * * *

'Tis over—the mysterious link is sundered between the mortal and immortal. Another has gone to swell the mighty number who throng the shores of vast eternity. 'Tis but one, and

she was lost to friends and hope and virtue; but O, she was of more value in the eyes of the Infinite Father, than the brightest gems that stud the evening firmament. Angelic watchers, from the battlements of immortality, have noted that soul's descent to darkness, and mourned with holy sorrow that it had lost a bright orbit forever. * * * * *

Compose those bloated limbs. Adjust those matted locks over the brow where Beauty once sat as queen. Let the humble burial be a *decent* one; for though no friend or kin, who knew her in her day of innocence, may drop a tear upon her pauper-grave, she is yet a child of humanity—ay, and one, too, who once held an envied position among the gifted and the loved. But there are eyes, far away, that weep for her, and will, till all earth's tears for them are dried—eyes that years since wept their bitterest when she became *worse* than dead—hearts that fainted in their agony, when she was lost to virtue and truth. She was not always the loathsome thing you found her, nor was her home wont to be among the outcast and the vile. She was once the joy of an honored father's house—the pride and light of a husband's home. She was the mother, loving and beloved, of beauteous children, and in her home of taste the gifted and the good sought her society and her converse.

Wherefore thus fallen? Listen—thou shalt hear. Without excusing her dark sins, let her history prove suggestive, alike to husbands and wives, parents and teachers. Let the former learn therefrom, that, as a pleasant home, and loving, winning social adaptation, is the strongest lure woman can use to attract man from vice and temptation, so, for *him* to make home attractive to *her*, by the *same* affectionate concessions and heart-prompted attentions, *is equally important*—and might sometimes ensure him against the wreck of his domestic hopes and happiness.

Agnes H. was endowed with great personal beauty, and a mind exquisitely sensitive. Sympathy and affection were her social life. Hers was a character, where the *feelings* and *sentiments* were in danger of governing, rather than *judgment* and *principle*. How injudicious then was the indulgence of her parents and teachers in that class of reading which fostered and developed rather than balanced and strengthened the constitutional tendencies of her mind! The most objectionable and grosser departments of fictitious literature were forbidden ground, but she was allowed to revel in the higher and most artistic productions of the poet and novelist, till imagination and poetic sentiment stood at the helm of character. She professed religion in youth, but her Christian character partook

largely of her natural sympathetic impulses. Fascinating in manners and conversation, full of the poetry of life and surrounded by a large circle of indulgent friends, she breathed through all her joyous youth the atmosphere of affection and tender sympathy. Opposites often meet in the formation of domestic ties. In the flush of youth, she united herself to a man much her senior and in most respects her opposite. Plain in person—of manners reserved and taciturn, he was one whose stern, inflexible principles seemed moveless as the mountain. Upon the *surface* of his unperturbed, philosophical spirit, the ripples of feeling seldom played. His was an unvarying pursuit of life's every-day, practical duties—unvarnished by poetry, adorned by no gilding of sentiment. Yet he was a silent worshiper of material beauty, womanly grace, and mental adornment. His extensive circle of acquaintance, deferred to the influence of his intellect, character and wealth, rather than the attractions of his social sympathies. He was never suspected of an inclination towards conjugal life, till Agnes crossed his bachelor pathway. She became his wife, and his home, where wealth and luxury were not wanting, became irradiated with beauty and love. With the enthusiasm of her nature she entered upon her new sphere. No little *pride* mingled with other emotions, that

she had been able to agitate the deep waters of that calm soul, and cause them to flow into the beautifying channels of domestic love.

Like many others of a strong, unsocial mind, he had hoarded his heart's wealth that he might concentrate it *all* upon the "right one," when he should find her. It would have seemed no mean mine of wealth, could curious eyes have peered beneath the stoical mask which covered it down where he kept it hid. Like deep waters which flow silently, set the current of his soul—less appreciated than the noisy brook which reveals its shallow, pebbly bottom, as it babbles along. He knew not how to manifest the affection that lived in his heart for Agnes, so as to meet the wants—the *necessities* of her mind. Alas! for the oversight of the mother who cultured his pliant childhood, that she failed to inculcate gentle, generous adaptation to other minds, that while she trained him for manliness and the world, and developed the strong and true, there was no wise hand to prune and culture those branches which were to yield their fruits within the walls of "home," and beneath whose spreading shelter, wife and children might some day need to repose.

Time sped and cares accumulated. Agnes was soon made to feel that the great demand of her social nature—what was to her the charm of

domestic life, was, and ever would be wanting in her marriage—that congeniality of tastes, and the manifestation of considerate and generous sympathy were what she must school herself to cease to expect. She gradually and reluctantly admitted to herself, that however worthy as a man and member of society her husband might be, his constitutional peculiarities and his defective social training were, and ever would be, to her sensitive, ardent mind, a source of chilling, blighting sorrow. Alas, for the sweet but delicate flowers which should spring up around the home-altar, when husband or wife is forced to admit, even in the secret chambers of consciousness, that their marriage-choice has been a mistake—a life-mistake. Perfection is an exotic, which blooms never on the sin-stained soil of earth; but assimilation, congeniality, and that true affection which sheds its sweetest fragrance in gentle forbearances and hopeful efforts for mutual improvement, are plants which must bloom in each domestic garden, or it becomes “like the heath in the desert.”

Mr. W., Agnes' husband, was one whose natural severity of judgment was most effectually called forth by what seemed to him *weaknesses* of character. He was one altogether unfitted, in his natural temperament or by his social education, to draw out or sympathize with others. He

never sought sympathy himself, and was apparently indifferent to it; yet it was doubtless to him, as to every human soul, like cool, refreshing waters on the arid sands of life. He needed his tenderer nature drawn out and cultivated. He needed to learn how to express and manifest what he felt. He loved his home, his wife, his children. He would have toiled for them, if necessary, or endured want or privation with the most unflinching fortitude. He was proud of Agnes' talents, and enlivened by her enthusiasm and wit. She knew that she was more to him than aught else, but the conviction pressed sorely upon her heart that he lacked essentially in sensibility, and that he was incapable of a very soul-absorbing affection for any one. She knew not how, away down in the depths of his soul, despite the faults he saw in her, she shone like a "bright particular star," else she might have been nerved to more womanly forbearances and more ingenious efforts to modify and ameliorate the asperities of his social exterior. Her character grew irritable and weak in its uncongenial atmosphere. She turned at length to fictitious reading, as a solace for her disappointment—just as a man often seeks the inebriate's cup when domestic annoyances beset him. But so surely as the fires of alcohol sear, blight and drink up the life of a victim, so do mind and character become blasted

beneath the influence of polluting, unholy fiction. But for its baneful poison many a lost one, now trembling on the brink of a dishonored grave, might be walking in the verdant paths of virtue.

Mr. W. saw Agnes' weakness of character more and more, but no gentle remonstrance or winning entreaty passed the lips of the stern, proud man. His wife at length learned to look anywhere, rather than to her husband, for sympathy, the interchange of sentiment or the confession of a weakness.

He who would have died to save her from degradation and ruin, would not depart even a hair's breadth from his peculiarities or inclinations, to quell her heart-sorrows, strengthen her weaknesses, or minister to her social joy.

The vicissitudes of life, after a few years, found them surrounded by four beautiful children, in a rude western home, far from privileges and refinement. Sickness, loneliness and domestic toils pressed sorely upon the wife and mother, and her spirit fainted and pined for human sympathy. To her morbid mind, life's pathway seemed to lie through a cheerless wilderness, where briars and thorns and deep morasses abounded, with no strong and tender hand to guide through its intricate mazes. To her husband's less dependent mind, the difficulties of their lot seemed but trifles, clouds in a summer-

sky. His resolute, philosophical spirit was more irritated than softened by her mental sufferings and discouragements. "What if she and the children were shivering with the ague's chill? The disease was not dangerous—it was one of the drawbacks of pioneer life, to be expected and patiently borne. What if no domestic help could be obtained? Others were as badly off. A disorderly house and an uncomfortable home could easily be rectified with returning health." So he went to his farm and business—and she struggled with her discouragements, and wept and watched by little sick-beds till death set his seal upon their first-born. Then she lay down sadly, wearily beside it, she thought, to die. Her husband had rebuked her motherly fears about the child, as groundless. He never "*borrowed* trouble" and thought it wrong to do so. Now it came upon him with the suddenness and force of an avalanche. The consciousness that with well-timed apprehension, assistance and skill could have been summoned, which, with God's blessing, might have saved his child, added no little to his sorrow. Then did the apparent clouds of indifference and neglect scatter, as he bent over the dead and the dying in unutterable anguish. The best medical skill was summoned from the nearest village. Neither prayer, nor effort, nor attention were wanting beside that sick-bed.

She lived—the blow was averted, prayer was answered ; but woe to her and her household that the curtain fell not then and forever upon her life's scenes.

She lived, but not to culture into permanency those manifestations of tenderness, which affliction had awakened.

The medical man who was summoned, attended her faithfully and constantly at her husband's request. As health returned, the grace and culture of her manners and conversation attracted him into prolonged and oft-repeated visits. He was one whose sympathies and intellectual tastes seemed to be in marked consonance with her own. He wondered at the flower of wit and sentiment, which had been transplanted to such uncultivated wilds, and soon perceived that the atmosphere of her home was an uncongenial one. He wore the mask of virtue, but beneath it and an intellectual and winning exterior, smouldered the fires of unholy passion.

Agnes' husband, relieved from the apprehension of losing her, returned to his neglected business, and the little attentions and enlivenments which the convalescent invalid needs much more than the extremely-sick one, were omitted or left to devolve upon the fascinating but dangerous physician. What Mr. W. saw bordering upon impropriety, or savoring too

much of intimacy, called forth no tender and judicious remonstrance and counsel, but that cold, contemptuous silence, which drove the tempted one farther and still farther from the sheltering haven of a husband's protection, out among those treacherous eddies, which ripple and break around the dangerous rocks of temptation. Her physician proposed a journey, for her health, to her native city. He was going and would be her escort. She asked her husband's consent and he coldly replied, "Do as you like; you are your own mistress." Oh! that some strong but gentle hand had taken that helm from the guidance of perverted feeling, and turned that sorrow-freighted barque from its dangerous course. Would that that husband had listened to the whisperings of Christian wisdom, rather than the suggestions of sternness and pride, and tenderly shown that blinded one *where* she stood. She went, vaguely expecting soon to return—vaguely hoping her home and its companionship would be more attractive after a short absence. Ah! deluded one, there was none to warn thee—none to guide thee—none to build up the crumbling altar of conjugal faith and love; no gentle hand of forbearance to rend from thy bewildered eyes the deceitful veil which hung between thee and thy sacred obligations, thy noblest home duties. When man with all his

wisdom and strength, society's head and lord, turns his footsteps ominously into temptation's path—how properly, how *imperatively* is woman called on to allure, to forbear, to make home attractive and give it power to win. How often is the midnight lamp trimmed by the patient watcher. How are the tastes and preferences of the erring one studied. How is the reproachful word suppressed—the breaking heart veiled with assumed cheerfulness, that she may not repel him she would win. How many wives—"their name is Legion"—sit lonely in trembling hope and fear, listening for approaching footsteps, long after happy ones have gone to slumber—and when those footsteps do approach 'tis but to crush and afflict.

How many wives bear in silence, on burthened hearts, the consciousness of wrongs, which were they *man's* to bear, he would hasten to seek a dissolution of the marriage-tie. O woman! sorrowing, suffering, scattered over earth's wide realms, linked in hopeless alliance with man who has forgotten, in sensual pleasures, his immortality, and proved recreant to his noblest instincts—thy patient endurances, thy heart heroisms, thy long nights of fearing, hoping, trusting, despairing; thy love and faith, when all others turn coldly away—that love which goes with thee to a felon's cell, and makes thee a

minister of peace and consolation when the sun of life is setting in ignominy on the scaffold—that love is recorded in the great historic volume of humanity. Its monumental record would be among the sons of men, but that it has come to be taken as a matter of course, and only its absence noted as strange or out of character.

Agnes never saw her home again—its inmates never saw their wife and mother. No opportunity was ever given her husband to retrieve his errors. Swiftly, surely, she went down into the utter midnight darkness of vice. Rapidly the way-marks of virtue disappeared, the lamp-lights of experience and love went out, till she stood amid the scattered hopes of life, blighted and scathed—a ruined thing from which the happy turned in loathing and disgust. But she pressed on in her downward course, like a traveler in darkness amid crumbling ruins, where every step is through deep mire or amid sharp obstructions, while around him slimy serpents crawl and hiss, and deadly monsters howl. Her end has been described. Oh, what an end! Could woman in her hour of innocence look upon the blasted living picture—would she help to swell that throng that year by year are rushing in spectral thousands to just such graves? “Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Beneath the mighty shadow of the Cross alone, is

there a *sure refuge* from temptation's scorching rays.

Who shall lift the veil from that heart, once apparently so motionless, that is beating in its desolation in that lonely home in a Western wild? Who can understand its death-like struggles as weeks and months hasted—but the wife and mother came not, nor tidings of her? Who reveal its great agony or its self-reproaches—as slowly, reluctantly, the conviction was admitted that she would return *no more*? Who shall follow him from city to city in search of her, or gauge the depths of his suffering, as he traced her from one haunt of vice to another, though never able to meet her? How he yearned in his self-reproaches to spread over her the mantle of forgiveness and tenderness, was manifested by his efforts to find her—but he yearned in vain.

Go, look into that blighted home. No hand of taste lends attractions, where once the flower and vine were cultured and trained in beauty. No gushing music awakens the echoes of the surrounding forest. No sallies of wit and cheerful converse enliven the evening hour. No mother's gentle guidance, leads little feet into the "green pastures and beside the still waters" of truth

The family are ministered to by a coarse rude hireling. A sorrow-stricken man sits amid a little group who show sad marks of neglect.

Deep furrows of grief are upon his cheeks. The thick mass of raven hair that shaded his intellectual brow is white as the almond blossom.

That once stern cold man, has computed by the unwritten arithmetic of a broken heart, the cost of his life-mistakes. He is cold and stern no more. Down his pale cheeks, the anxious tear steals with childish frequency, and his tenderness and care of what is left him of his domestic wreck is like the brooding tenderness of a mother.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GRUMBLER.

"SINCE trifles make the sum of human things,
And half our misery from our *foibles* springs,
O let the ungentle spirit learn from hence,
A *small unkindness* is a *great* offense.

HANNAH MORE.

READER, are you a *grumbler*—one of those irritable, fault-finding, never-to-be-pleased spirits, whose highest gift seems to be the facility of discovering what is wrong about others? Does a scowl and a most peculiar intonation accompany the ever-reiterated, "Why is *this* so," and "Why need *that* be so?" Are you also a husband, (a "house-bond,") the one on whom wife and little ones depend, for all of peace and brightness their earthly home may yield them?

Do you carry into that home, with all your love for its inmates, "The continual droppings of a complaining spirit?" Is the house always adjusted for your especial annoyance? Are the meals too late or too early—the food too rare or overdone, and the children always doing some-

thing which the mother should have prevented ; or manifesting habits at which their father is astonished, while he applies no remedy but rebukes to the mother ? In short, are you one of those much-abused men, whose buttons are off, whose linen is not skillfully ironed, who always find ham on the breakfast-table when you desire 'steak, and omelet when your palate anticipates broiled chicken ? Is your wife in the habit of choosing the *most inauspicious* time to go to a sick neighbor's ? Does she presume to take tea out just *when* you need her most at home ? Does she get up one of her troublesome sick headaches very often when you want a little extra petting and attention to your comfort ? If you invite an old friend to dine with you—one of those few friends whom you particularly desire should be favorably impressed by your family arrangements—do you deprive your wife of all self-possession before dinner by expressing your fears of a decided *failure* ? After the departure of your guest do you knit your brow for a week if all things have not gone off well, and visit upon your poor mortified wife all the shortcomings of the cook, the children and yourself ? If so, you are one of a large and influential class of husbands, and your home I doubt not presents one of these aspects : Either the constant attrition of your fault-finding habits has worn off all

the *polish* of domestic life, and your wife has learned to respond to your fretful, peevish complaints with corresponding tones; or she has settled down into a discouraged, desponding habit of mind—feels that it is useless to try to please—that she must jog along alway under a cloudy sky, while she hangs the veil of disappointment over many a fair picture. Hope and Fancy painted when thou wast wooing her, and when all she said and did was *just right*, and received your blindest smile of approbation.

Some have learned from the “meek and lowly” One, to “let patience have its perfect work,” and *such* know how to smile serenely amid the sorest irritations of life. Even *they* are not what they might be, for no human soul was ever yet harmoniously developed under the influence of fault-finding and censoriousness, unrelieved by encouragement and judicious commendation—no more than earth’s flowers and fruits yield their beauties in perfection, when sunshine and genial warmth never dispel clouds and tempests.

A sour, scolding wife, a home where love’s sunlight never streams through the windows of care and toil, has driven many a husband to the companionship found in bar-rooms, and the oblivion of the maddening bowl. Men look on and say, “Poor fellow, he has no comfort in his family—I would drink, too, if I had such a wife and

such a home as he has." Did you ever hear of a wife who was by the same cause driven to love the draught of liquid fire? I have, and have sighed as I gazed on a hopeless wreck. Her history I will not tell thee *now*, but rather that of one whom a husband's ceaseless fault-finding and unreasonableness, drove, not to haunts where revelers grow brutal over their cups—but to the secret, soul-destroying, intellect-beclouding habit of opium-eating.

A stalwart frame, iron muscles, and an indomitable will, had James A. He was called a good, a *promising* young man, where he resided; and the shy young thing he made his wife, before she was twenty, was considered a fortunate mortal. Enterprising and industrious, he intended to do right in all the business of life himself, and he expected others to do so also—more than this, he expected others to do pretty nearly what he considered to be right.

He had been reared in a home where severity and fault-finding ruled. His father—"a good man, but"—found something out of place, out of time or out of sorts, from January to December. He was always trying to bring his family, his neighbors, the church and the world, up to his own high standards and theories, by denunciation and censure. He never commended, never approved, in doors or out. No, not he, it was

contrary to his policy ; some advantage might be taken of it by the children or young folks. If he abstained from expressing blame, his family might infer that matters were in a tolerable shape. His mother toiled and drudged, early and late, and as she toiled, she fretted and scolded. Had she been a less resolute character, she might have wilted *down* under the discouragement of her husband's endless criticisms. Instead of this, she learned from him to be a fretter also, and she learned her lesson well.

They were industrious, kind-hearted to the poor, and gave their large family many good habits, restraining and guiding them in many respects well. But oh, their habits of fretfulness and complaining ! How many rills, whose waters were bitterness, did they cause to flow, that forever chafed and fretted their banks as they hurried along ! It is not wonderful that hereditary predispositions manifested themselves, when James found himself at the head of a household. Keenly as his own childhood had suffered from this bane of all home-comfort, its leaven nevertheless clung to him and worked most effectually, as cares of business and demands of family increased. Its consequences might have been less disastrous, had his feeble, sensitive wife been differently constituted. Had she submitted her head to the manipulations of a

phrenologist, I opine that he would have declared "love of approbation" a prominent "bump," while quite a depression would have been discovered in the locality of "self-esteem." Her husband, however, had a sufficiency of the latter to compensate for any such depression.

Early in her housekeeping experience, she learned that her husband's palate and digestive organs were of so much more delicate organization than those of ordinary mortals, that, with her limited experience, it was impossible so to prepare supplies for the table as to give him comfort and satisfaction. To her strong desire to please him, she added a keen perception of its importance to his mental serenity, as well as to his physical comfort and gustatory pleasure. She studied how to please, and when she looked for a token that she had been successful, the keen blade of criticism, or the invidious comparison, or the dissatisfied look cut down the hopes which had stimulated her efforts. Fanny Fern says, "It is a humiliating reflection, that the straightest road to a man's heart is through his palate." So thought James's wife sometimes, still she strove to minister acceptably to all his wants, and in time she attained to a very respectable position as a housekeeper. So at least thought her husband, though he never told her so, he only boasted of it among his friends.

Commendation was not in the line of *his* policy, any more than of his father's before him. But she breasted many a huge wave of discouragement, and some priceless gems were forever lost from the domestic coronet, before she became an adept in housewifery mysteries. Can a wife ever remedy defects in her own domestic training so easily or so effectually, as under the stimulating commendations, the generous encouragements, and gentle forbearances of a husband's love. If she is made to feel that the ownership of a good housekeeper, was not the great end for which she was sought in marriage, will the *true* wife be less regardful of the comforts and importance of good housekeeping.

James A. had a keen eye to the defects and omissions of this degenerate age, in the training of children! He had a keen eye for all defects, and it scanned their proportions and relations much more readily and naturally, than the softer and more pleasing features of character or society. His first paternal reveries were accompanied with the emphatic resolve that *his* offspring, physically, mentally and morally, should be *trained*. I suspect, however, from his subsequent course, he intended his wife should do the training, while he filled the responsible position of critic and dictator. The emphatic, ominous, "My dear," preceded the "Why do ye so?" as

often as his footsteps crossed the threshold of his home. The house, the children, the servants, the books, the furniture, all gave occasion for suggestions and reproofs, or brought down a storm of words upon the hapless mistress of the establishment. The presence of company sometimes failed to operate as a restraint upon his fault-finding habits. The stammer, the blush, and the suppressed tear, often betokened how keen was the lash, and that a long experience of its strokes had not entirely blunted the sensibilities of the wife.

Hired help would not stay and bear his ceaseless complaints ; friends sat down hesitatingly at his table ; his troubled face and fretful tones disturbed their digestion. His children learned to deceive, to avoid his unjust and ill-timed reprimands. The angel of comfort, joy and confidence seldom tabernacled in his dwelling. Had you seen and heard him in his own home, you would never thereafter have doubted his claim to the title of a much-abused man, upon whose helpless head was accumulated a double share of life's petty troubles and vexations. You could not have sojourned under his roof, and long wondered why his wife looked so prematurely old and toil-worn, nor why all vivacity of spirits had given place to melancholy and discouragement. Her injured husband wondered how it was that

some men had such sunshiny, cheerful homes. *She* wondered how maidenhood was so easily decoyed into the cares and toils and disappointments of married life.

There came at length a strange light into that care-dimmed eye—fitful flushes passed over the faded cheeks. Memory seemed beclouded, and anon unnaturally acute—strange repetitions and omissions interrupted the threads of her discourse, and then her conversation would sparkle with the vivacity of youth. Long seasons of lethargic slumbers would occur, while the husband scolded in vain at his irregular meals, and the little ones roamed at will. What meant it all? Ah! she had learned, with a deadly drug, to find oblivion from her cares, her infirmities and her domestic irritations. She—a poor, discouraged, disheartened woman, whose burthen of life seemed greater to her than her ability to endure—instead of seeking divine support, had resorted to that magic soothing, which rendered the peerless Coleridge a burthen and a nuisance to his friends, and which a De Quincy and some of his compeers in the world of letters had found so irresistible.

Many efforts, many resolves, many struggles, tears and sighs were recorded of her, before the insidious current had carried her out to a returnless distance from hope and salvation.

Sometimes the enemy seemed almost vanquished, and then a reproachful, discouraging word—comments on the force of bad habits, or accumulating cares, burthens and perplexities, would drive her to larger, more stupifying portions of the fatal opiate. Harrowing, heart-breaking was it to witness the conscious degradation of that wife and mother, as she struggled with her captor, only to feel his toils being drawn tighter and tighter around her, dragging her down to helpless imbecility.

Her fault-finding husband now found himself suffering from *real* trouble. Slow would he have been to admit its true source, or lay the fatal cause at the door of his own bad habits. His restiveness under it, retarded not the sure advance of destruction. His wounded pride or the severity of his reproaches, availed not to restore his patient domestic servant to her former intelligent usefulness in his household. His domestic interests were no more regarded than if she had never shrunk from the sting of criticisms, or grown restive under his fault-findings and complaints; for she now acknowledged a more *absolute* master.

One evening, when for some days she had been making one of her spasmodic efforts to reform, and while she was almost free from the immediate influence of opium, she threw open

the door of her heart to her husband, and made known to him her hopes, fears, and desires. She told him if he would only be patient and hopeful, would forgive and assist her, she *would reform*, and that she would submit to any course he thought would ensure the desired end. He replied to her that he had lost all courage and hope—told her she was a perfect wreck. Still, he seemed to think she *ought* to throw off her fetters by the force of her *will*. He told her, moreover, that he could not bear the mortification of her conduct much longer, and if she persisted in her course, he should cease to treat her as his wife, and remove the children from her presence.

Not many wives would thus have met a repentant husband, who sought to turn from the seductions of the wine-cup. The pensive, down-cast look—the scalding tears that dropped upon the pillows of her little ones, as she returned again and again to press her face to theirs, and kiss their sleeping, sunny brows—the heart-rending sobs that accompanied her passionate, “Forgive me, dear James, for all I have caused you to suffer,” as she tenderly embraced him, murmuring as she untwined her arms from his neck, “and may God forgive you for what you have unconsciously made me!”—were received by him as tokens of the deep and he hoped salutary impression his

words had made upon her. They haunted him in after days, like dirge-like strains of funeral music. The rising sun next morning saw James at his business. A shade of disappointment clouded his brow that she was not at the breakfast-table, but it was nothing strange, as she now seldom joined her family till ten or eleven. As he returned at the dinner-hour, he was met by a messenger who said "Bridget" wanted him to come home immediately; she feared something ailed her mistress, as she could not waken her. "An extra dose of opium," he muttered to himself. "That's all the use of my efforts; the woman is incorrigible; I have tried mild measures long enough." And he strode into his disordered house with a lowering brow. "Bridget" and a neighbor she had summoned, were chafing her temples and vainly endeavoring to recall animation to those rigid features, and warmth to those icy limbs.

Yes—she had taken an "extra dose," and her husband had no more occasion to exhaust his patience with mild measures for her reform. She had relieved him from the necessity of severity, and the further mortification of his pride. The next morning's paper announced that "the wife of James A. terminated her life yesterday, by swallowing laudanum. *Insanity* was doubtless the cause, as she had for some time been

suffering from ill-health and depressed spirits. She has left a bereaved husband and a large family of children, and many friends to mourn her loss."

For awhile, the subduing influence of the awful visitation softened the tone of his spirit, but it was not long before the house resounded with the old familiar strains. The oldest son, a sensitive, impulsive youth, absconded from the paternal roof; he said, because he was never appreciated, and could not please his father. He was drawn into the great vortex of city vice, and perished ignobly before he was twenty. The oldest daughter united herself clandestinely to a worthless, thriftless man, before she was sixteen; and together they drank the dregs of poverty and discomfort. She said, "Anything is better than to *live at home*." The younger ones have their features fixed in chronic scowls, under the tuition of their fault-finding, scolding father. Such were the children of James A., the man who would "show a degenerate age how children should be trained." His epitaph should be,

HERE LIES ONE,
WHO,

DURING HIS WHOLE LIFE-TIME,

Was so occupied with the Faults and Short-comings of others,

That he had no time to rectify his own.

CHAPTER V.

THE STEP-MOTHER.

“~~WERE~~ it mine, I would close the shutterz,
Like lids when the life is fled,
And the funeral fire should wind it—
This corpse of a *home*, that is dead.

For it died that autumn morning,
When she, its soul, was borne
To lie all dark on the hill-side,
That looks over woodland and corn.”

IN a commodious mansion in one of New England's loveliest villages, there was gathered, many years since, a stricken, sorrowing group. They stood, with breaking hearts, around a bedside in the mother's own room, which had ever been the sunniest and most attractive one in the house; but over whose threshold there was then creeping a dark shadow—one cast by the approaching presence of the grim, forbidding conqueror. Unmindful of an agonized husband and his ten needful children, he strode on and laid his icy hand upon the heart-strings of the wife and mother, and its loving, anxious pulsations, were stilled forever. She

“ Hath gone from her cares to rest;
She hath taken the babe on her quiet breast;
They will meet her footsteps on earth no more,
Nor hear her song at the cottage-door;

For her work is done, and her household is written *desolate*. What will they do? Where will they look for sympathy, care and love? Who, in their future journey across life's wilderness, shall shed upon their beclouded pathway the sunshine of maternal love? How freely would that husband and father have sacrificed his hard-earned competence; what would he not have sacrificed, what not have endured—to have arrested the inexorable decree which went forth for his bereavement! How desolate must be his home! How overwhelming his cares! How new his position! He, who had never known what family cares were, only to provide well for temporal comforts! How was he to provide even for the daily care of the little ones? How for their government, domestic training and education? Where should he look for the comfort, counsel, sympathy and love, which had for years been his solace and his home-life? He loved his children tenderly and was a most indulgent father; valued above price the blessing they enjoyed in their faithful, self-forgetful mother; but he knew not how to care for them himself. Home, to him, was a place to come to

for refreshment and enjoyment; his children were his playthings and amusements. His wife, *never* care-free, was the tireless servant and the sleepless sentinel of his home. He had married in early life, and with her had struggled up from comparative indigence to competence and independence. Imbued with true New England enterprize, he had become the leading business man in the region where he lived—indeed, he was so much of a business man, that he had little time or thought to give to his wife's cares and labors, and was in fact ignorant, to a great extent, of the number or weight of them. He only knew that he tried to furnish his family with every comfort, that his home was about what he would wish to have it, and his wife the best of wives. He believed, with Knowles, that

“ Women act their part

When they do make their ordered houses know them—

Men must be busy out of doors; must stir

The city; yea, make the great world aware

That they are in it; for the mastery

Of which they race and wrestle.”

How much longer, in human probability, she might have blessed his home, had he more carefully *husbanded* her energies and lightened her cares, it is not my present purpose to decide. That she was always at home, when not in the sanctuary, and always toiling, the on-lookers knew—and her husband knew, that upon the

withdrawal of her presiding presence, the home machinery was at once disordered. The snows of winter, and the flowers of summer, rested and bloomed upon the grave of his early love, and he departed at morn and returned at evening to his bereft home to mourn and see, with newly-acquired perceptions, how his children were suffering for the ever-watchful care of her who was resting in her grave. The children and his home were disorderly. While he was at his business, they were roving, he knew not where, and acquiring sad habits and forming dangerous associations. Such housekeepers as he could *hire*, even at high salaries, were comparatively worthless. He saw that the rank weeds of self-will, discord, waste and idleness, were taking deep root in his once happy and well-ordered home. One of two things he *must* do—scatter his children (from whom he felt he *could not* part,) among relatives and at schools—or seek some one to *step* into their *mother's* place. Friends urged his marriage, and his own heart craved a home where his children were. But where should he find one, who with capacity, intelligence and piety adequate to the position, with its difficulties and trials, would accept it? Ah, where? Not among the young and care-free. To them, youthful hands, *unincumbered*, were proffered. Should he seek one who had

passed life's meridian in honorable and independent maidenhood? How could one, who had never known a mother's cares or felt the beatings of a mother's heart, sustain herself in such a family, and bear the burthen of so many children that were not her own? Would he look for a widow of home and property? Few have *benevolence* enough to assume such labors and trials, when the necessity of home and bread does not knock at their door. He bethought him at length of one in the circle of his acquaintance—discreet, pious, gifted. He thought he could not do better than to bring her to his home; but, ah! she had three children; would it do to add them to his already-large family? Beside, they were penniless, and the mother was toiling to support and educate them. It never occurred to him, that it would be no more, yea, not as much, for him to lighten her heart and hands of *that* load, as for her to lighten *his* of the load he sought help at her hands to carry. This widow, Mrs. B., had been reared tenderly, and her life's early pathway had been strewn with the fair flowers of promise and joy; but its meridian found her wandering among the graves of buried hopes, beneath the scorching sun of widowhood and poverty. She had once moved in high and cultivated circles, and was fitted in mind and person to adorn any station in life. Had she been a rich

widow, or one without children, many would have sued for her hand—but who wanted the incumbrance of a poor one with three children, if they could do better? Money is often counted so much more priceless than the services, care and love of a *good* step-mother, that many a rich business man, with children needing a true mother, will, when the right one offers—but incumbered with dependent children—count the cost long and anxiously, fearful of adding children, *not his own*, to the burthen of family expenses. There are few practical scruples, in appropriating services valuable beyond compensation, to themselves and their own children—but the instances are rare, of a generous, whole-souled *equal* assumption of care and responsibility for a wife's children by a former marriage, that is expected of her as step-mother. It is one thing to be a *step-mother*—quite another thing to be a *step-father*.

The disadvantages in this case were over-balanced by the wants of his family and the warm regard Mr. G. felt for Mrs. B., and he proposed to her, modestly suggesting that her children were nearly old enough to make their own way in the world. She accepted and married him, just as such desolate ones often do, when weary with their struggles for home, bread, education, and protection for their fatherless children.

They forget that though the struggle is hard and toilsome, that of a step-mother in a stately mansion is often more so—more unrestful, more beset with difficulties, less independent. In the case under consideration, the cares and trials, the toils and responsibilities were conscientiously and faithfully met. She won the love and revolutionized the habits of that large family. She harmonized the conflicting elements she found there, and gradually brought the children into that subjection for want of which they had so long suffered. The father wished to educate them well. She knew how to plan and direct. He was a hospitable man, and she spread over his hospitality the beauty of refinement and taste. She took to his home his aged mother—a second *child*, from accumulated infirmities—and gave her the warmest nook and the easiest seat in the house, and tended her lovingly even to the gateway of death.

She managed in pecuniary matters prudently and advised discreetly, and his thousands became tens of thousands. So skillfully did she hold the reins of family government, and so palpably did his household improve under her administration, that he left the burthen unshared, to rest unquestioningly upon her shoulders. In one sense it was a heavier one than if she had been their own mother, for she early perceived with wo-

manly tact, a certain unexpressed sensitiveness, when she presented their faults to his consideration; so she often stemmed the current of childish or youthful follies and faults alone, when in other circumstances she would have sought counsel. How great the sagacity requisite to manage such interests! How much more than human wisdom, to harmonize such a family! What frequent and large draughts from the cup of heavenly love and grace are needed to meet its trials. How heavy oftentimes, the heart-burthens—how heroic the endurances and forbearances—what mighty triumphs over self and nature, to keep the eye always single, the spirit always unruffled, the heart ever benevolent, and under the influence of stern, unyielding principle.

Mr. G.'s children were better educated, probably, than if their own mother had lived. They went from their father's, to make homes of their own, and fill stations of honor and usefulness. The younger ones knew not—only as it was told them—that she was not their own blessed mother. The older ones would never have known it from her conduct and deportment towards them, or in any lack of effort for their good. Sometimes, when they rebelled against her gentle authority, the turbulence of their spirits gave vent in the term "step-mother," muttered in reproachful tones. But when sickness or trouble came, they

turned to her for sympathy and care. On her they pillowed their aching heads, and she it was who whispered in the dying ear of those who early departed, *that name*, which has power to soothe and sustain amid the swellings of Jordan. She led them to the foot of the Cross. She cultured into symmetrical beauty, warped and distorted characters, and called out their noblest aspirations for intelligence and usefulness. Who shall compute her value to that family? Ye who pore over ledgers and accounts, who balance profits and losses—ye men of business who know how to value, and bargain, and barter, with whom “cost,” “profit,” “interest,” and “capital,” are constant words, tell us if you can, the value, the profits, the actual capital, such a step-mother and wife is, in such a family? What could she have been more to him or his? Did she not freely give what she had, and was it not priceless? Was she not, even in the eyes of a gainsaying and meddlesome world, a good step-mother? She did her *duty*—she did no more; for doth not our Infinite Father require our best and highest efforts in our life-work? Will He ever say, “Well done, good and faithful,” except to those who have done what they could?

Honor to her, who to her own offspring is in its truest and highest sense, a good mother; who

with a love elevated above the instincts of nature, untiringly labors to train those whom God hath given her for Him and humanity. What double honor should encircle *her* brow, and gild *her* memory—who, for another's children, endures a mother's toils and cares, and faithfully, in little as well as great things, acts for them as "seeing Him who is invisible." *Thrice honored* should she be, who gathers up the wasted waters of maternal love, and diffuses them in murmuring sweetness over the arid wastes of a motherless home. In that day, when God honors His lowly ones, will not such stand, even with those who bear glorious palms of victory? And will there not be a great and noble band of such? It is common to attach something repulsive to the word "step-mother," in the minds of many. There are a great many poor, selfish, contracted, unkind, step-mothers, and there are a sad number of wofully miserable *own* mothers. But there are multitudes of the former hidden from human observation, who are faithfully acting as under the inspection of an Infinite Eye, amid toil, reproach, and affliction, and who look for their reward only at the hand of Infinite Love. There would be more good step-mothers—fewer poor ones, if the number of defective, essentially defective husbands, was less, and there were more truly good step-fathers. Confidence,

sympathy, justice, unselfish love and gentle influences, will make most wives, about what they see their husbands are desirous they should be. But how many a step-mother lives a tried, worn, perplexed and afflicted life, devoid of comforts or rewards for her toil—how many are desolate and *broken-hearted*, just because their husbands cannot, or *will* not, help them bear their heart-burthens, or sympathize with them in their *more* than maternal cares and difficulties. I verily believe there are many noble-hearted women, capable of harmonizing and beautifying bereft homes, and supplying places vacated by death, in households; and who would cheerfully and lovingly do so, if sustained, sympathized with and aided in their difficulties, by the husband and father—who now sink down in utter discouragement, after a few years of difficulty, and earn for themselves the name of unamiable women, and bad step-mothers. Others, when they realize the burdens they must bear *unaided*, fade gently away, leaving the husband twice widowed.

“O hearts, that break and give no sign
Save whitening lip and fading tresses,
Till Death pours out his cordial wine
Slow-dropped from Misery's crushing presses,
If singing breath or echoing chord
To every hidden pang were given,
What endless melodies were poured,
As sad as earth, as sweet as heaven !”

CHAPTER VI.

THE STEP-FATHER.

“THE daily thread of hopes and fears,
Weaves up the woof of many years,
And well thy labors shall have sped,
If well thou weavest the daily thread.”

Woe to the fatherless, when the strong arm of love which labored for and circled them is gone! Earth has seldom for such another father. In woman's loving heart may spring a yearning tenderness for the motherless—but man's sterner nature does not easily unbend in fatherly affection, except to his own offspring.

Highly did Mr. G. value his new wife—the step-mother of his children—not only for her genuine worth, but for the comfort and order she brought to his hearth-stone. He prided himself upon her appearance and her influence in society. He relied on her judgment and services in all arrangements for himself and his children; and her conjugal and maternal love was a “well-spring of gladness” in his house.

His deportment towards her never left one

doubt upon her mind of her importance to him and his; nor that her loss would be considered the greatest of calamities to his children, not second to that of their own mother. But was he to *her* children, as a *father*, what, as a *mother*, she was to *his*? Did he, as a husband, sympathize in all *her* interests and seek to promote them, as she did his? Truth answers, No. In his interest they were one—towards those of hers which lay outside his circle, he manifested indifference, neglect. A kind, a *good* husband he intended to be—he thought he was. It never seemed to occur to him that the comforts with which he surrounded her, were not ample returns for her unshared cares and toils in his family; that the privilege of bearing his name and being the mother of *his* children, should not produce at heart partial oblivion of her earlier maternal claims and affections. He had an intelligent and feeling sense of the obligations and duties of a step-mother, I doubt if he ever gave a thought to those of a step-father. Her three children had a *shelter* with her, when they were not away toiling for the means of education. They ate at Mr. G.'s table and called him "father." They occasionally received trifling presents from him, and never direct unkindness. But of fatherly care and sympathy they had no experience. No wants supplied, no necessities inquired into, no

empty purses considerably filled, no little scheme of pleasure or improvement suggested and the means for their accomplishment proffered. Of their conflicts and trials and aspirations he knew nothing. Would he have been satisfied with the same amount of motherly care and affection for his children?

The son, by his own efforts and some assistance from the Education Society, entered the ministry—but unaided in the least by his step-father. He put forth heroic efforts before he fitted himself to stand with the message of salvation on heathen shores. The daughters struggled, as New England girls know how, for an education, stimulated by the energetic mother. Though that mother, by rigid economy in her own personal expenses, saved something from her yearly allowance for clothing, and still dressed befitting her husband's credit, and from these savings assisted her daughters a little, she was never seconded in any such efforts by her wealthy husband. Yet he was a generous man. He gave away hundreds of dollars yearly to benevolent societies. Indigent young men who were seeking an education found a friend in him. Poor widows and fatherless children were often cheered by his bounty. He doubtless lost sight of the injustice of taking all the energies of the mother from her own children and concentrating

them on himself and his own. Or perhaps he feared to awaken family jealousies, or create unreasonable expectations, if he extended his bounty and care to his *step-children*. Probably he never thought what it signified to thus swallow up the mother, in the wife and step-mother. One of her daughters followed her brother to foreign lands, a missionary's wife. The other went to the Far West, as the wife of a minister, but returned in a few years, poor, widowed, and with three little children. She spent a few weeks with her mother and then accepted from Mr. G. the rent of a cottage with two rooms, where she opened a small school and earned her own and her children's bread. Mr. G.'s oldest daughter died some years before himself, leaving also three little children, who were added to Mrs. G.'s cares and burthens for some years, till their father's second marriage. Even then they were, one or more of them, much of the time with her, because their grandfather thought they received so much more tenderness from her than from their step-mother.

Mr. G. died some years before his wife. He left her in his will, a comfortable income for her support, to revert to his children at her death. Far be it from me to set a moneyed value upon the priceless treasures of conjugal affection—but money and personal services are oft-times expres-

sive exponents of selfish or unselfish love. Had Mr. G.'s attention ever been thus directed, he might easily have seen that with his wife's energies and talents, devoted to the acquirement of money, she would doubtless have been able in those long years of trial and care spent in his family, to have accumulated something for her own children. Whatever these energies would have been worth in the market, they were priceless where they were expended. Her daughter on missionary ground died, and her children were sent to this country, to the care and guidance of their now widowed grandmother. As she was free from other cares, she could care for them, give them her time and services, and divide with them and her widowed daughter, her limited income. Years ago she went to her rest. She toiled on amid cares and infirmities to the last. But her noble, benevolent heart responds no more to earthly cares and calls. She has found a home for herself and her children where "they neither marry nor are given in marriage." She has left the sweet savor of her memory and example as a wise and rare step-mother—a *prudent* and *unselfish* second wife. But I fear, if the unwritten page of that domestic history were penned and read, in the light of eternity—if its rights and wrongs were weighed in the equal balances of God's justice, "*Wanting*"

would be pronounced against the loved and honored husband and father thereof.

I have cited this sketch not as an isolated example in domestic histories, but as a comprehensive illustration of one of the wrongs and inequalities prevailing in multitudes of home-circles. Who talks or writes about the duties or responsibilities of step-fathers? Who pities the victims of indifferent, penurious or neglectful ones? Would that the meddlesome tongue of gossip and scandal would wag as seldom about step-mothers. It is not to be denied that many of the latter are far from being *good ones*—yet it is more than probable, they often fail, from embarrassments and discouragement, growing out of the morbid feelings extant against step-mothers. But how rare to find a step-father who gives and concedes in this relation, all he expects and claims from the step-mother of his children. How frequently is such a father just as much of a parent to the children of his neighbors, or to the guests in his house, as to those of his wife. How many there are, who tacitly, perhaps unconsciously, foster the feeling among their children, that their *father's* step-children are intruders, interlopers, or have their limited privileges by a sufferance which demands their gratitude, though no jot be abated in requirements upon *motherly* love and patience. We

should often be forced to blush for the *manhood*, which clutches so tight the well-filled purse and stints out so meagerly the fatherly sympathies towards the children of his own wife—while at the same time such large demands are made upon what that wife has to give; we should blush, I say, only that it is the way of the world and the teachings of society. I know a large family, who have long enjoyed the influence and care of a most admirable step-mother, and reaped the benefit of her labors and toils, though she has always been permitted to pay for the board of her only child, from the scanty pittance her first husband left her. The first wife was in many respects, a most admirable woman, but she sadly failed in training her children. Of this she was aware, and on her death-bed made the unusual request of her husband, that he would secure this individual as her successor, as soon as he felt that he could. This request was made in view of her superior qualifications and skill in the management of children. She hesitatingly accepted, more from a desire of usefulness, than in ignorance of the nature of the onerous duties she was assuming. Well had she performed her work. Those once ill-mannered, ill-bred, disorderly children, are coming upon the stage of life, showing the hand of skillful culture. Nobly does she meet her cares and trials. “The

heart of her husband doth safely trust" and his children confide in, honor and love her. Aside from the mutual interchanges of affection in this family, the wife has her own personal wants supplied, in return for her ceaseless toils—and the privilege of having her only son under the same roof with herself, by paying to her well-to-do-in-the-world husband, the last penny of her independent income, for his board. This she has done for years though that son performs his proportion of work upon the premises. Yet he is a good and noble man—so says public sentiment. Is he a *good* husband?

I know of another, who with equal faithfulness has given her energies to the care of a large family of step-children—all of whom were liberally educated for high and influential positions in society. Her two own children—she brought no moneyed dower with her to her new home—by the advice and consent of their step-father were apprenticed to learn menial trades, with but a limited common school education. Another, where the wife had from the estate of a former husband, the interest of \$2000, for the education and support of four children—where the rich husband always received the pay for the board of these children when they were at his house, though from very early childhood his six children received her unremitting services. So

entirely was her time absorbed that she was obliged to hire the sewing of her sons done when they were with her in vacation.

These selections are made from histories that are, in the estimation of the public, happy, fortunate ones.

It is ever a poor, pitiful sentiment—an ignoble and belittled manhood—which would require more at feeble woman's hands, than is conceded to her; that proposes to a mother to forget or turn from the care of her own offspring to be a mother to others. The plain, unvarnished English of the sentiment is this, "Are not your children, madam, of sufficient age, or can you not so dispose of them, that you can without incumbrance, come and care for, and love and live for me and mine? Can you not, for my love—the privilege of bearing my name and toiling in my family—forget in a measure, your own maternal instincts and yearnings, and consent to give your best energies and efforts elsewhere, than to your own fatherless children?" It is a mistake when woman consents to accept a home where her presence and influence cannot command as much for her own offspring as she gives to the children of another. It is a sacrifice of justice, and helps to foster and strengthen a false apprehension of domestic obligations. Let womanly sentiment, in the circumstances we have

considered, and her reply, when she is sought in a second marriage be, "I will, to the best of my ability, be, in its truest sense, a *mother* to your motherless ones ; I expect the same, as a father from you to my fatherless ones." In a second marriage, if ever, where there are mingled interests and complicated duties and cares, there should be the perfection and refinement of domestic love. In such homes, if anywhere, should shine the light of mutual, unselfish devotion ; and be seen the beautifying influence of considerate, sustaining sympathy. Too frequently, interest, convenience, or necessity, influences second marriages, rather than genuine, elevated mutual affinities and affections. Will it be thus when woman is more developed in her noblest powers, more helpful of herself, less dependent—and when man is more wisely, truly and domestically educated ?

CHAPTER VII.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

"WHEN storms and darkness gather round,
To fill me with despair,
Then, Saviour, let thy smiles abound,
And glory shall be there."

MRS. DANA.

ANGRY clouds were scudding before a piercing December blast, which whistled through the leafless boughs of a gloomy forest. Alternate sleet and snow filled the air. Twilight was fast deepening into a dark and cheerless night, while the storm-spirit, as it rioted on its course, whistled the desolate song of winter.

A pale-faced matron of gentle mien, stood in the doorway of a comfortable-looking log-dwelling. The huge fire that blazed and crackled in the spacious fireplace, threw a cheerful glow upon the windows and lighted up every corner and recess of the room. The tea-kettle sang and simmered on one corner of the hearth, while from the other, savory odors suggested thoughts of refreshment and good cheer. A neat and tastefully-spread table occupied the centre of the

room, one end of which was partitioned off by a curtain of chintz. This was now drawn aside, revealing a neatly-carpeted floor—a bed in one corner covered with a snowy counterpane, while the opposite was occupied by an old-fashioned English piano. There were also to be seen, music, books, and many a little token of refinement, or relic of better days. Here sat a boy about nine years of age, rocking with his foot a little cradle, while his hands were busily employed in manufacturing, with a jack-knife, some wooden trinket.

A girl somewhat older was reading by the fire-light, and her expressive face was often turned from the pages she conned, to gaze with her mother into the darkness without.

The evening meal was evidently awaiting the arrival of some one—it required no great sagacity to perceive that that one was the husband and father.

The wife looked anxiously up the road, listened attentively, as if to catch an expected sound, noted the threatening sky, and murmured, "Would they were here." Around her home lay an almost-unbroken wilderness. No friendly lights gleamed from neighboring windows. The sullen sky and the lordly forest-trees painted in dark and almost indistinct outline against it, were all that met her eye. The hooting of the

night-owl and the distant bark of the wolf were the only sounds that fell upon her ear from without, save the sougning of the tempest as it marshalled its forces. From *within*, the soft, low murmur of quiet home-life, fell down upon the ear of her soul, and she longed for the return of her dear ones, to participate in its comforts and joys.

The lady to whom I have introduced my readers, was the wife of a pioneer in the then "Far West." She had for some hours been expecting the return of her husband and eldest son, who had left home at daylight that morning, for the nearest village, ten miles distant, where they were obliged to go for their family supplies, and what the post-office brought them. They must make their way mostly by blazed trees, over a rarely-traveled wagon track, and near their home must ford the stream upon whose banks that home was located. This required care and skill in its then swollen state, even by daylight.

At length the matron's face brightened, and there was a stir in the little hive, as the wheels of the great lumber-wagon rattled over the frozen ground, and "Whoa" sounded from the well-known voice of the father. A gentle radiance beamed from the mother's eye, as she warmly welcomed them, and hastened to assist in the removal of overcoats, etc., while Mary and

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Willie sprang to bring in packages from the wagon.

"Go, put out the horses, Charles," said the father sternly, as he rubbed his hands by the fire. "Don't you know better than to let them stand in the cold?" The almost-benumbed boy looked imploringly towards his mother, and she gently said to her husband, "Can you not let Charles warm himself a little before he goes out? He is very cold." "Boys shouldn't mind the cold, and the horses must not stand any longer," was the decided reply. If the mother thought the cold might be as hard for a delicate boy to endure as for a robust man, and that a little assistance, under the circumstances, would be very fatherly, she did not say so. She whispered to Willie, took down the lantern, lighted it, tied the boys' comforters around their throats, and patting Charlie on the shoulder as she said cheerfully, "Be brave, my boy!" opened the door, and the brothers went out into the storm and darkness.

Somewhat uneasy, at length, at their prolonged absence, she suggested to her husband the propriety of stepping out to look after the boys, and rendering them a little assistance. "There is no need of their staying so long, and I cannot go, for I have pulled off my boots," was the reply. She well knew that if the boots were off, it was

useless to urge farther effort, so after a moment she donned hood and shawl, and went out herself to find them. They were vainly endeavoring to undo buckles and straps upon the harness of the horses. Willie was too short to reach them, and Charlie too much benumbed by the cold to use his hands to advantage. She told him to direct her, while she applied her own hands to the business of unharnessing, and soon the noble animals were eating at their rude mangers, and the trio bending their steps towards the house. "Look cheerful and have a brave spirit, my son," said the mother to C. "How *can* I, when I have a father who does not care a whit for me, and would not help me if I were freezing? He made me drive most all the way home, while he was so cold he had to walk to keep warm, and then *laughed* at me when I complained of the cold, and——" "Stop, Charlie," said his mother, "have you forgotten 'the *commandment with promise*?' Go in to the fire, my dear, and remember, that to render cheerful and prompt obedience to your parents when it costs you self-denial and crosses your comfort and inclinations, is a severe but truthful test of your *principles*, and of the respect and love you bear them. The boys passed in, while she stopped a moment, lantern in hand, to see if any packages had been overlooked in the wagon—perhaps she lingered a

moment to smoothe a ripple on maternal feelings—and then, serene as ever, joined the in-door circle.

The few moments she had been out, served to make her keenly alive to the tediousness of the night, and the glow of gratitude which warmed her heart for the comforts and mercies that surrounded her, found utterance at her lips. Mary placed the food on the table, while the mother warmed her aching hands, then she said cheerily, "Come, let us give father and Charlie an opportunity to break their long fast. Mary, draw around father's arm-chair so that he can feel the warmth of the fire to the best advantage, and put a chair on that side for Charlie too." But C. preferred his own place at the backside of the table, where he sat shivering, and looking very much as if some great load pressed on his heart. A long and formal blessing was implored, and then all applied themselves to the business of eating.

"Father," said Mary timidly, "how do you relish this venison? We obtained it of an Indian after you left this morning, because you had wished for some so long."

"O, it's well enough, I suppose, but it is not cooked right, and I do not think meat very healthy at night."

"But, father, this is dinner and supper together,

only you did not come as early as we expected you."

"Mary cooked it herself, hoping to give you pleasure," said the mother, as she saw the flush of disappointment mantling her daughter's cheek. "Perhaps you can tell *how* you like it, so that she can suit her father another time."

"Very likely," was the indifferent reply.

The father applied himself silently and industriously to the business of eating for some moments, deigning neither comment nor query; looking up at length, he observed Charlie's sullen air, and turning to his wife said, "You have spoilt that boy. He is the greatest baby I know of. Why, he cried like a girl because his hands were cold, and I made him drive a little way this evening. I guess *my* father would have warmed my hands so that I would have remembered it, if I had made such a fuss about the cold at his age."

The lad's face flushed, and a reply was upon his quivering lips, but his mother's look arrested it. She very gently said, "Let us hope for him, that our country-life and his out-door exercise will make him more robust and resolute, and that he will yet be a great comfort and help to his father, in his present enterprise."

"I shall never depend on him," said his father,

as he again helped himself bountifully to the venison.

Silence and gathering shadows darkened the atmosphere of that warm, bright room, and seemed to be creeping over the little circle. The tempest was abroad in its fury. It roared through the forest, prostrating its giant sentinels with thundering crash. It moaned up the ravine of the river, and shrieked wildly around their humble, isolated dwelling. Bright, mid the outer darkness and the in-door gloom, shone a gentle, grateful, beaming spirit of ministration. Its possessor seemed determined that if the storm-spirit was abroad, naught but the angel of peace should abide within, by their glowing fireside. She looked at her son, a bright, thoughtful, delicate-looking boy, whose expressive face wore traces of irritable passions, and morbid sensibility, and which was now dark with suppressed ill feelings. She turned her eye to her husband, on whose stern, unimpressible features could be traced no sensitiveness to gentle, loving influences. She knew that in his heart, there was more of it than pride, habits, and a false social education allowed him to manifest. True, he had not by word or look responded to her cordial greeting or acknowledged her studied regard to his comfort; but she knew he was not entirely insensible to them. His tones had been harsh and he had

been unreasonable and fault-finding towards those whose feelings were more precious to her than her own, but she knew he loved his children, and loved their interest, and that he erred more in judgment and manners, than in intention. Her heart went up silently for wisdom from above, that she might be enabled to play discreetly upon the discordant harp-strings of her home, and execute acceptably to God, woman's most delicate mission. To retire from the board and fireside with no bright rays of cheerfulness and love penetrating and pervading the spirit gathered there, but instead, sullenness and discontent, she felt would be leaving a page blotted forever in the domestic record.

"You found letters for us I hope," she said inquiringly; "I was so rejoiced at your safe arrival, that I forgot my usual eagerness for them."

"Yes," was the concise reply.

"Mary, set up the table, draw around father's chair, and get his slippers—we will hurry away our tea-dishes, while he looks over the papers, and then have a feast with our letters." Mary did as her mother requested, and plunging her hands into the capacious pockets of her father's overcoat, she brought forth papers and letters to their hearts' content.

"Oh, oh! a letter from Aunt Mary!" and

the children clapped their hands, and would have danced for joy had their father not been there.

"Here's one from grandmother too, and *here's* one from Uncle Joseph," said Charlie, who had not spoken before, but who was, with the rest, attentively examining the superscriptions, "Oh! I'm so glad, and it's to *me* too, only directed to father's *care*,"—and he suddenly became quite gleeful.

"Can't these children be taught to make less noise, and act less absurdly?" said the father sternly, as he lifted his eyes a moment from his newspaper; "I do hope, wife, you will not bring them up to make such a *fuss* over letters as you do."

She had just been musing upon the blessing of postal communication—upon the joy and comfort it brought to the pioneer, far from the great, busy world, and far from friends and dear familiar scenes. *Some* wives would have replied, under similar circumstances. This one had learned to exercise on such occasions the grace of Christian *silence*, and no reply passed her lips.

Soon all were seated, and the letters opened. "Would you like to hear me read these letters, or do you prefer to read the papers and look at the letters some other time?" inquired the wife.


If I am to know their contents I must hear them

read, for I hate to read women's letters, they are always so long and tedious." The children were scarce able to restrain their audible, "Do read aloud," so, in gentle, tremulous tones, she read those love-messages from far-away friends, whose tender sympathies neither time nor distance had chilled. As she proceeded, she often had to choke down the starting tear, and baby, who was jumping and crowing in Mary's arms, frequently required a little attention when the voice would not be controlled. This wife had long since learned in the school of experience, that nothing caused her husband's spirit to shrink so effectually into the recesses of indifference, as tears from her; and she carefully avoided indulgence in this luxury in his presence. Had you looked over the paper with her, reader, you would have discovered, in her reading, some omissions made with woman's tact. For prudential reasons, she would not that husband or children should hear such sentiments as the following: "We feel as if *we could not* have you there, buried from society and those who love and *appreciate* you; bringing up those dear children with no advantages for culture or refinement. And we feel very anxious about your health, all unused as you are to such labors and multiplied hardships as must meet you there. We dare not think what would become of those

children in the wilderness if sickness or death should overtake their mother."

The father gave neither smile nor response to any news communicated in the letters or messages addressed to him, and soon after they were read, he was soundly sleeping in his arm-chair.

The mother chatted cheerfully with her children, both animating and instructing them. With the skill of a moral artist, she presented the bright side of western life. She made them feel that they might be of service to their country and the world, in helping to lay the foundations of society. That, children though they were, their mite of influence might be made to tell for good, though in the populous father-land that same mite of influence might be almost imperceptible. Then she drew bright pictures of their home-privileges and comforts, till their young hearts glowed with a grateful sense of their blessings. She showed them, how they could be just as refined and affectionate as they strove to be, or could be any where; how, with brave, resolute spirits, to meet life's hardships and irritations, they might, with God's blessing, in that retired and humble home-school, be fitting for any station to which Providence might call them in after life. She also told them of the pleasure they might one day have, in welcoming the dear friends from whom they had just heard, to their



new home, when the wilderness under their culture should have become a garden and fruit-laden trees should yield their luxuriant harvest.

The clouds had materially lighted in Charlie's sky, and the last one broke away, when his mother producing a ten-dollar note, said, "See what Aunt Mary has sent to purchase a side-saddle for sister."

"Oh, *good! good!*" he exclaimed; "now she can ride with me when I go to the post-office; can't she, mother; when she has learned to manage a horse? When spring comes, won't I hurry my work so as to get time to ride with her? And won't I get up Jack and Bill to teach her how to ride, every day?" and the boy's face glowed in anticipation of the delight.

"Perhaps father won't let you," said Willie; and the dark cloud gathered slowly about his spirit again. He was silent for some moments, then, looking earnestly at his sleeping father, then into the fire, he said, "Mother," and hesitated as if he would give utterance to something and yet could hardly venture.

"Well, my son, *what is it?*"

"Mother, I wish father was like Uncle Joseph. When I am there it seems so easy to be resolute and to do right. I can please him, and I never get tired working with him. He makes me see a great many pleasant things about what seems

hard and disagreeable when I work with father. It seems as if he understood all a boy's difficulties and feelings before he expressed them, and as if he loved to see boys happy, as well as useful. It don't seem as if father had ever been a boy, but it almost seems as if Uncle Joseph was one now, only he is so much wiser and better than boys are."

"I am glad you love your uncle," said his mother; "he is an excellent man, and has an admirable faculty for interesting and profiting children."

The logs in the huge fire-place had burned down to a bed of glowing coals, and the evening waned. "We must offer our devotions, and go to our slumbers," said the mother.

After some unsuccessful attempts to arouse her husband, she read a portion of Scripture; they united in a hymn of praise, and after commending them to the care of the Great Shepherd, she gave them a warm good-night kiss, and they sought their beds.

By dint of effort she succeeded in awaking her husband. To his complaints of cold, etc., she responded with cheerful services for his comfort. When he was comfortably reposing in his bed, and the little inmate of the cradle laid beside him, she stirred the embers, and sat down to muse.

How attractively did her *early* home—ever made bright with love and sympathy—loom up to her mental vision ; also far-away friends, and pleasant scenes of social joy. Memory wove a wreath of hopes and purposes, and painted them with the glowing colors of youth ; experience clothed them with the graver hues of maturity ; consciousness whispered, “ *Blasted.*”

Dark clouds began to gather about her spirit, and the mists of sadness to dim her eyes. She knew her own weakness too well long to allow herself the luxury of sad or pensive sentiment. Many a time had it proved a snare to her soul. “ Let me remember,” she murmured, “ who has guided and appointed my feet their pathway, and let no unholy sadness divorce me from cheerfulness and duty, but may I ‘ *delight* to do *thy* will, O God.’ ” She had learned long before, where to turn her soul for sympathy and communion, when the fountains of earth seemed empty and dry, so she sang in her low, sweet voice :

“ My Beloved, pass before me ;
Never from my sight remove,
Many waters flowing o’er me,
Cannot quench my burning love.

My Beloved, now endue me
With thine own attractive charms,
May thy Spirit sweetly woo me ;
Fold me in thy sheltering arms.

My Beloved, safely hide me
In the drear and cloudy day ;
Ere the windy storm has tried me,
Hide my trembling soul I pray.

My Beloved, kindly take me
To thy sympathizing breast ;
Never, never more forsake me ;
Guide me to the land of rest."

Then she sought her pillow, while peace like a dove brooded over her spirit.

Reader, you have doubtless discerned ere this, that I have introduced you to a married pair with very uncongenial dispositions.

The wife was an affectionate, social woman, with refined sensibilities, while the husband was morose, obtuse, and decidedly odd. Nevertheless more lights than shadows visited their dwelling. "The why and wherefore," together with a farther glimpse of their home-life I will reserve for another chapter.

If I could hope that my story would light up one sunbeam in any home, gloomy with discordant elements, or teach the wife and mother how easily and cheerfully, to "take up the burthen of life," then would my pen become "a trap to catch a sunbeam" for my own spirit.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

"I LOVE to see my Father's hand,
Though oft it bears a rod ;
'Twill lead me to the promised land,
The city of my God.

When I'm a rover far from Thee,
My best-beloved Friend,
'Twould be a proof of love to me
If sorrows thou shouldst send.

MRS. DANA.

WHEN, "to be married"—suitably, if it may be, but at any rate to be married—is with young ladies less an end and aim ; when congeniality of taste, social and constitutional adaptation, moral symmetry and beauty of character, shall outweigh personal attractions, the fear of single life, or the eclat of a wedding—then will there be found fewer such ill-assorted unions as that noticed in the previous chapter.

If parents did not steer the youthful bark so straight for the harbor of matrimony, confident that the best is done that can be, for cherished daughters, when "a good settlement" is secured ---if they were not so ready to resign them on

slight acquaintance, in the first flush of womanhood, before judgment, tastes, or even preferences are developed and matured, then would there be fewer parental tears to fall, in after years, over the premature decay and unhappy homes of their dear ones.

Oh! that our daughters would weigh more seriously the solemn responsibilities involved in marriage—its over-mastering influence on destiny and character. Then would the jest and mirth, give place to earnest pleading for Heavenly guidance.

At the age of sixteen, Emily B.'s fond, mistaken parents, gave her in marriage to Mr. S. Tried in the school of experience, he was "found wanting" in those qualities her woman-heart most craved and needed.

She had been reared affectionately and too indulgently; God's directions and plans for family government, had been very much modified by her parents. They had bestowed none too much affection and gentleness, perhaps, but they had been far from thorough and decided in subduing her youthful will, and teaching her the doctrine of parental sovereignty in the family.

She had always been considered amiable; but to what ordeal had her temper ever been subjected in that home, where almost every wish had been gratified? "Submissive," her parents

called her ; but her strength of will had never been tested. Pious she was thought to be ; but temptation had slumbered, and from " the straight and narrow way," mistaken affection had striven to extract every thorn.

The Infinite Parent found it necessary to administer His own rod of discipline. Under His sore chastenings she learned her own deficiencies, the strength of her own will, and the great wants of her soul.

Stroke upon stroke, lesson upon lesson, did the Great Teacher mete out, till the will, the affections, all the hopes of life and the capacities of the soul, were laid, by His subdued child upon His altar of consecration.

Do you ever think, Christian parent, when, like Eli of old, your highest efforts at family government and restraint, are a " Why do ye so, my sons?"—that you are paving the way for the sore discipline of God upon your cherished ones ?

Mr. S. lost his mother in his infancy. Under the influence of a harsh, stern, penurious father, and a fretful, selfish and worldly step-mother—all the little fragrant flowers of the heart were early blighted. No gentle dews of sympathy moistened and refreshed their fibres, no rays from the genial sun of affection warmed and stimulated the delicate soul-plants.

Cold, stern, practical, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the "almighty dollar," was the home-atmosphere of his childhood. There he was practically taught that life's great end and aim was "to get a living," "to do well in the world;" and that its holiest, dearest relationships were chiefly valuable as they forwarded this all-important object. He was early told to push his way in life—to make money—"fairly if he could, but at any rate to make money." And thus he went forth from his father's house, to battle in the great mart of mammon, for filthy lucre.

None may know how often in his unloved and joyless childhood he went to his little bed under the gable-roof, and wept himself to sleep because he had no one to love him; or how many times he stole down into the old orchard, and hiding behind its trees to screen himself from scolding and severity, choked down his boy-tears, hot with irritated passions, while he plotted how he might get away from such a home, and go somewhere, where there was something to love—something to make life pleasant. With advancing years, his heart became incrustated with selfishness, pride, and moroseness, till he came at length to consider the betrayal of sensibility a weakness and a shame.

In the strife of business, in the marts of trade,

did he learn gentle lessons of human sympathy and brotherhood? Ah! the great, rough world is not apt to develop into fruitfulness and loveliness, the neglected affections of home. Who can estimate the loss, who measure the calamity, an individual sustains, who has been so educated, or whose social and moral education has been so neglected that the heart's gentlest affections, its most delicate sensibilities, its soothing, refreshing sympathies never can flow out spontaneously and benignly towards those who tread with him life's thorny pathway? But so it was with Mr. S. At the age of thirty, he led his youthful bride to the altar. He had become a wealthy man; his name commanded respect "on 'Change." He was not lacking in dignity or intelligence, and as he wore the insignia of wealth, his *peculiarities* were simply *eccentricities*. He was a professor of religion, but his piety was more to be discerned in observances and austere proprieties, than in melting charities and Christ-like tempers and affections. When his domestic and social qualities became fully understood by his bride—when the great, black clouds of moroseness and selfishness darkened the horizon of her new home, portending many a storm; when the chilling breath of unfeeling authority, checked her warm, youthful impulses—then up-rose the latent rebellion of her heart, and she murmured in bitter-

ness of soul, and cursed her unhappy choice. How could she, the petted child of love, who had never felt but the gentle persuasions of affection, bear the pressure of her husband's strong iron will? She reasoned, complained, wept and resisted; but all in vain. A joyless future seemed to threaten her. Great icebergs of disappointment, and chilled affections, and repelled sympathies seemed to be closing about her heart, shutting out all the warm sunshine of life and love. Early wedded love was fast giving place to indifference and dislike. Pride silenced complainings to friends; but pride had no garment in its ample wardrobe with which it might hide the tints of sorrow, or cover the traces of disappointment upon her youthful face.

When her first-born was laid in her arms, there came over her heavy, sorrowing soul, a strange desire to enfold it lovingly, and lie down with it, to death's unbroken slumber. But conscience whispered, "Are you ready to die?" Is life's work done—has its mission been accomplished? Turn not thus away, tempted one, from life, before the sweet fruits of thy Father's chastenings have shed their blessings on thy thorny pathway.

I need not here trace all the steps by which she was led. I will not tell my readers of all her sorrows nor her errors, nor withdraw the

curtain from scenes of domestic discomfort, when recriminations and complaints deepened the gathering gloom, and gave keenness to the icy weapons of the husband's indifference and sarcasms.

God knows how to lead His chosen ones. He knows just what trials and discipline to send upon them. How often he leads through dark and intricate paths, at which worldly wisdom wonders—leads them by “a way they know not,” out of the desolate, the autumn-seared wilderness of unbelief and self, into “the green pastures and beside the still waters” of His love. Thus, faithful to His promise, “I will never leave thee,” did He lead Mrs. S.

Her wifely affections were forced back upon her heart, to go out with concentrated strength upon her little one. When all her heart-strings were twined most closely about it, and it seemed a necessity to her comfort, to her very life, the spoiler set his icy seal upon the chiseled features, and from beneath the drooping eye-lids there beamed no more love and gladness.

Others were born unto her, and when her weary watchings with their sickly infancy were ended, and maternal patience had its reward in the bloom of health—just as the liquid music of childish prattle began to echo joyously through the house, it was suddenly hushed one eventide,

and bereavement and desolation brooded over her home.

Then disease and lengthened prostration visited her. In the stillness of her sick room, she communed with her own heart and reviewed the lessons of God's providence. And in that chamber of weakness and pain, where no tender sympathies assuaged her sorrows, and no gentle hand of human love brought soothing to the sufferer, did the Infinite Comforter reveal himself to her soul. To its restless, despairing outreachings, He whispered, "Peace! be still." He opened her spiritual eyes, and she saw that Great Rock in a weary land, in whose shadow she might find refuge and rest. There she laid down her will, and her great sorrows, and the untold yearnings of her soul were met and satisfied, in the infinite compassions of her Lord.

Week succeeded week, month followed month, yet there she lay in her hushed and darkened chamber, wasting in body but growing in soul. The light of Eternal truth illumined and filled her mind. God was her almighty Teacher—His Spirit her gracious purifier.

When sorrowful memories came stealing over her, and she vainly listened for the echoing tread of little feet, there would vibrate upon her spirit's ear this gentle whispering of Infinite Love, "I will be better unto thee than sons or

daughters;" and responsive tones would utter, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter."

When her soul felt its human cravings or put forth its tendrils for human support and sympathy; when she listened for, yet dreaded her husband's footsteps, and an undefinable chill would pervade her at his formal inquiries; then accents from out the Invisible, sweet as the long-coveted voice of ministration and love, would fall upon her spiritual ear, saying, "Thy Maker is thy husband." "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth we are dust."

Supported by an unseen Arm, she was strong in her weakness. With ear attuned to the whisperings of a *heavenly* love, her soul no longer shrivelled nor fainted in its dearth of a *human*.

When her feeble footsteps began to totter back from the brink of the grave, and the cup of life was once more given her to drink, with a new and solemn cheerfulness did she press it to her trembling lips. Existence had now an aim, a high and holy purpose, religion an aspect more comely than forms and observances. "God knows what is *best*, and *that is best for me*," and I "delight to do Thy will," were the breathings of her filial love.

Whatever was undesirable in her lot or what-

ever grieved or tried her soul, she learned to regard as a lesson of her Father's teaching, and it became more her aim to study its import, and improve its suggestions, than to avoid its unpleasantness or repine at its evils.

Her husband regarded her unwonted serenity, encompassed as she was by physical infirmities, with a satisfied surprise. Its influence was perceptible and happifying upon his disposition and habits.

Soft beams of human love began at length to penetrate their dwelling. Forbearance and gentleness dispelled many a dark cloud that gathered in their horizon. Though congeniality and the most attractive aspects of conjugal love might never beautify that home, it nevertheless became one of comfort, though not of joy. Little ones were again folded in her arms, and the deep fountains of maternal love and tenderness were unsealed when they lisped the name, "Mother." As she remembered those who slept, her heart went out in solemn thanksgiving that they had been gathered to the fold of the "Good Shepherd," before the lineaments of her own desponding, rebellious spirit had been stamped upon them. Thus the *tempest-tost* found a quiet haven. Though her sky might never glow with the brightness of her youthful fancy's coloring; yet a peaceful, chastened radiance, overspread it,

for she “walked as seeing Him who is Invisible”
—a soft and gentle light, fringed even the clouds
that overshadowed her as she journeyed on—for
clouds there were, reminding her continually
that she sojourned in the land of shadows; that
earth was not her rest.

CHAPTER IX.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

Does the reader inquire, why are the business man and his family introduced to us as dwellers in an almost-uninhabited wilderness?

The same cause sent them there, that has driven thousands of brave, energetic men, from the crowded cities of the East, to build up and populate the wilderness and prairie of the West—adversity.

Neither shrewdness nor forecast insured Mr. S. against the disasters of a great financial crisis. He walked the streets of the city one day in all the independence of wealth, and an unsullied *credit*—he awoke next morning to find himself a *poor man*. Of all his large possessions, not much was left him but an extensive tract of wild land in the distant West; so distant then, that none but the land speculator and his agents had ever discovered its location or gauged its prospective advantages.

To this wild and distant spot, Mr. S. decided to remove with his family, after his business was

finally wound up. He neither consulted his wife, nor heeded the astonishment of his neighbors, when they heard the rumor thereof. His agents had informed him of its advantages of location, and convinced him that an early occupancy would doubtless secure it as the centre of business and influence, whenever a "County" should be there organized. Pride made him reluctant to recommence business on a small scale among his old associates. What most immediately affected himself was more potent in its influence, than what affected only the feelings and comfort of wife and children. What though the emigrant's life might press so sorely with its privations and burthens upon his gentle wife as to mark the furrows of age ere life's meridian! Was it not her place, as a wife, to help him along in his schemes, and was he not the *lord* of his household?

Her own feelings she could sacrifice, she had long since learned to do so, daily, for others—but she shrank from removing her children from all the restraints of society, to where, for long years, the chimes of Sabbath bells would never remind them of holy time, or with their solemn tones, invite them to the worship of the sanctuary. Cheerfully would she have practised the most rigid economy and self-denial, might she still have dwelt with her little flock, amid the

refinements and privileges of the home of her kindred. But the thought that God might have something for her and hers to do in that distant wilderness, nerved her with cheerful resolution, and with the sweet assurance that He would "never leave nor forsake her," she made preparations for her toilsome journey. Sad were the partings from friends and kindred. Almost unanswerable were their objections to her departure, on account of the delicacy of her health. But well she knew, that argument and remonstrance were vain, and with a moistened eye and tremulous voice she bade them adieu, and murmured, "Good is the will of the Lord"—"Just and true are His ways."

When this family was first introduced to the reader, they had been settled in their new home but a few months, and their first winter of western life was just shutting them in. Their nearest neighbor was three miles from them. Human faces seldom greeted them out of their own fire-side circle. Occasionally the grim form of an Indian hunter darkened their doors, and Mr. S. sometimes employed a man to *chop* for him; otherwise they constituted their own secluded little world.

As soon as spring should open, Mr. S. was to commence (on as large a scale as his means would admit) clearing, improving his water-

power, etc., with a view to a future village and mart of business.

The sensitive Charlie found much in these new circumstances to try and irritate his spirit. He loved his mother and sister devotedly, and the former possessed his confidence and an influence over him to an unwonted degree.

His father, unmindful of the difference between his own country-formed habits, at his age, and those of the city-boy, required of him many services, which under the circumstances seemed unreasonable, and which severely taxed his slender store of strength.

The mother trembled most for him, when she thought of the future for her children; but faith whispered, "Cast all your care upon Him." Deeply did she feel the need of wisdom from above, that she might deal discreetly with this son. She well knew how harshly his father's peculiarities must grate upon his finely-strung sensibilities. In their city-life, he had never been brought so much in contact with him as now. Then, Mr. S. was seldom at home in business hours, and whenever he was there, it had seemed to be an intuition with the children to keep very quiet or out of his way. Now he was almost constantly with him, and she feared, lest sympathy for her child, in his spirit-trials, should render her unwise in her dealings with

- him, when she should enforce the duty and respect he owed his father.

Mary, her eldest, had early learned, at the feet of Christ, to wear the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." In her, the mother found a blessing and solace.

Through that long, severe winter, Mrs. S. devoted herself to the comfort of her family and the education of her children, and it was marvellous how they improved under her tuition, and how much sunshine lingered over that little spot, shut out, as it was, from the great, busy world.

Think you not, gentle reader, that this mother was doing more for her generation, more for her country and her God, in the seclusion of that home-life—in those daily, earnest moldings of mind and character, than do they who clamor in public for the forum of the orator or the high places of the statesmen?

Winter had gone, at least winter-months, but not the cold or snow. "I must go to the village in the morning," said Mr. S. As he left the room, Charles remarked to his sister, "I hope he won't want me to go with him." "Well," she replied, "if he does, you will try, dear brother, to go cheerfully; won't you?"

"I wish *I* could ever go," said Willie, "I have stayed here ever since we moved. Charles *always* goes."

"I should rather stay here with mother and Mary, than to go off in the cold with father. Why, Willie, you'd cry and wish yourself at home, a dozen times, if you should go ; and then father would scold you, and call you a baby," was C.'s response.

"I'd *risk it*, if I could go, and I wish I was old enough," replied the resolute Willie. "Mary, won't you ask father to let me go, to-morrow, if he wants any one?"

When their father came in, Mary preferred Willie's request, and received for the answer, "Don't be so foolish, child." "But, father," she urged, "Willie wants to go very much, and he has been nowhere since we moved here. Won't you gratify him this once?"

"It does children no good to be gratified ; it spoils them. Let me hear no more about it."

Next morning the sleeping Charlie was aroused very early to feed and harness up the horses. When Mr. S. had satisfied himself that his son had dressed with all due promptness, and gone to the stable with his orders, he turned over to console himself with a nap while breakfast was made ready—for though he was an energetic man in the great enterprises of business, he was also very self-indulgent where the little comforts of life were concerned.

Charles came in from his work before his

father was up. He asked his mother if he was to go, and she said she thought not, as she had heard his father express no wish to that effect. "If he desires you to go, remember, my son, to let your principles govern your feelings."

"I will *try*, mother," was the prompt reply.

"We have not time for family worship this morning," said Mr. S., as he rose from the breakfast-table. "Are the horses ready, Charles?"

"Yes, sir; shall I hitch them to the sleigh?"

"Yes, and be spry. Get your coat on before you go out, and we'll be right off."

"Is Charles to go?" inquired Mrs. S.

"Of course he is."

"He did not know it, and has not made himself ready."


"Stupid fellow—then let him go without being ready."

"O father! do just let me change my coat, and put on a clean collar," said the fastidious boy, looking in dismay at his labor-soiled clothes.

"No! learn to be ready, and know what you are about, next time," was the stern reply.

"Obedience is better than sacrifice," whispered the mother, as she helped him on with his overcoat, and tied his comforter over his ears.

When they had gone, she gathered the remnant of her family about the fireside, and offered the morning sacrifice of prayer and



praise. While Mary dispatched her morning duties, her mother sought the little chamber she was wont to frequent, when she could be alone, and there wrestled with God for her tempted boy, and all her dear ones.

How frequent and how fervent were her pleadings in that rude garret! What an inheritance of blessing did she there lay up for her family! What treasures of wisdom did she there obtain from Him "who giveth liberally" to all those who ask! Think of it, care-worn mother, sore perplexed with your children's faults and peculiarities; anxious and in doubt how to steer your maternal course, so as to avoid the weakness of excessive tenderness and sympathy with your children's desires on the one hand, and the repulsiveness of undue severity and lack of sympathy on the other. When you stand in doubt and discouragement, and say, "How shall I order the child?" hear His words who never trifles with His children, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." How dare any mother prosecute her momentous work, without this Rock on which to plant her feet!"

It was dark, and excessively cold, before Mr. S. and C. returned—the former exacting and taciturn as usual, the latter struggling to appear brave and cheerful. The keen eye of his mother

saw that it *was* a struggle, but she did not appear to notice it. Her own spirit was beautifully placid; for in her soul-communings that day with her Saviour, faith had received the cheering reply to her petitions for her children, "I will guide them by my counsel, and afterward receive them to glory."

After the family had retired for the night, and she supposed all but herself were slumbering, she heard low, stifled sobs, proceeding from where Charles slept. Quietly but quickly dressing, she ascended to his chamber, and found him convulsed with excess of emotions, and vainly striving to suppress his sobs. She gently laid her hand upon his burning brow, and in her own soothing manner, asked him the cause of his grief.

"O, mother, I would run away, and not live here and *try* to please father another day, if it were not for you and Mary. It's no use to try, for I cannot please him, and I wish I had never been born"—and his grief burst out afresh. His mother thought best to let him open his heart, and pour out his troubles, and afterwards minister to its maladies, rather than to check him then, when the strong tide of feeling was upon him.

"Why should you wish to run away from your home?" inquired his mother tenderly.

"Because father won't let me take a bit of

comfort here. He don't think I have any feelings, and he don't love me one bit, I know. It don't seem to me that he cares for any one's comfort but his own. He has brought us off into these awful, lonely woods, and I expect you will die here, you have to work so hard, and then I shall want to die too."

"What great temptation has overtaken my son, that his heart thus flows out in bitterness towards his father, whom God commands him to honor?"

"Ever so ~~many~~," he replied, through his sobs. "I did intend to do right, and be good to-day. I conquered my bad feelings this morning, and felt strong and happy, for I knew how glad it would make you. Everything went wrong; and though I never tried so hard to please father, he has not spoken one kind word to me to-day, nor seemed to be pleased with one thing I have said or done. Then, mother, you know that dollar Uncle Joseph sent me: I have been keeping it to buy something for you and Mary, and should have spent it the last time we went to town, but father would not let me go into a store, but kept me watching the horses all the time. To-day I wanted to keep out of sight, I looked so shabby, but he made me go in and sit while he attended to his business. So I selected a book which I thought would interest you and Mary, and while

I was waiting for the merchant to attend to me and receive the pay for it, father came in and asked me what I was about? I told him, and he ordered me to give him my pocket-book. I was strongly tempted to refuse, for you know that Mary has let me keep that ten dollars for her side-saddle, in my pocket-book, and somehow I *felt* as if something would happen to that, if I gave father the pocket-book. But as soon as the words you whispered to me this morning came to my mind, I gave it to him. When he saw the ten dollars, he asked me what it meant, and I told him all about it, and that Mary was only waiting for warm weather to get her side-saddle. Then father looked as if he thought I had done some mean thing, and said, 'Fiddlesticks—Mary will want a frying-pan and a broom much more than a side-saddle, and it's not worth while to have this lying in your wallet, useless.' And so he spent it, mother—he spent every cent of it; and he bought tobacco with my dollar. Oh, it is *too bad*, Mary can have no saddle, now, and it is more than I can bear!" and the grief of his boy-heart welled up again, almost choking him.

When his mother had heard all, she took his burning hands in hers, and kneeling by his bedside, gave him one of those beautiful lessons which he remembered in long-after years, and

which even then, brought strength and soothing to his wounded spirit.

"My boy, this is a trial, but you must bear it. Your father is probably very short of money and the eleven dollars were lying idle in your purse, and he needed them. I presume he will return them to you and Mary, when he receives some money he is expecting soon from the East."

"He never *remembers* to pay me back anything he takes of mine," said Charles bitterly. "If he had *asked* me for it, or done as you do about such things, I would have given him my dollar with all my heart—but, mother, it did seem so selfish for him to take it for tobacco, and I can't help feeling that it was, if he is my father."

His mother told him decidedly that he had said enough with the spirit he was indulging. "When you talk and feel so," she added, "it makes me greatly fear I have failed in my efforts to inspire you with proper views of life, and your relations to your parents. You know, without my telling you so, that you are indulging in rebellious feelings, and I beg you to put them away, as you value God's blessing, my son. If your father crosses you inclinations, it is because he thinks it for your good. If he fails to sympathize with you in your little plans and boyish feelings, it is more because he does not know

how to do so, than from any lack of regard for your best interests. He is struggling here to advance the temporal welfare of his children. Try to sympathize with him in his efforts, and to conform to his peculiarities. Think, that even your father's severity may be a far greater blessing to you than excessive indulgence might have been. You will see drearier day and nights, my son, if you journey long in life's wilderness. Keener blasts will whistle about the ears of your manhood, when you will be far away from the twinkling of home-lights, where no mother, sister, or brother, waits to greet the wanderer. Rougher tones than those of your father's reproofs will fall upon a more heavy-laden heart, and you will be pressed into harder service than any he now requires of you. More grievous losses and disappointments than those of to-day will doubtless be yours to meet and bear. Strive, while disappointment and vexation can be tempered by home-sympathy, to nurse and discipline yourself for the roughness and conflicts of future life."

Home should be a school of discipline for manhood's sphere of action, as life with its shifting scenes should be for that great home of peace where those shall abide who, having been tried, *endure*. There is hope for thee, Charlie, when the inflexible sternness of thy *father* is thus tem-

pered by the judicious teachings and tenderness of thy *mother*.

Summer came and passed away. Before the tempests of another winter raved about that dwelling, there was heard the clatter of machinery. Smoke curled in graceful wreaths over other roofs, and lights shone out cheerily from other windows—for more than one family called that forest-bound spot *home*.

Mrs. S. looked ten years older, in consequence of excessive cares and labors. Mary was thin and sallow, and Charles decidedly emaciated and sickly. Willie's life and resolution had abated a few degrees, and the baby had forgotten its playful ways.

All had suffered, more or less severely, from that scourge of new-country life, ague and fever; but a good beginning was made—the prospect of worldly prosperity loomed in the distance, and to the philosophical business man, other considerations seemed of minor importance.

I will not protract this lengthened sketch with a detail of the growth and progress of the infant settlement; nor will I recount the labors of love, the cares, toils, and burthens *she* sustained, who left the impress of her Christ-like spirit and her superior wisdom there.

The hum of business now prevails, where once her gentle voice broke the stillness of the shaded

retreat, as she poured her cares and burthens, her aspirations and adorations into an Almighty ear. The "iron horse" with lightning-speed, now thunders over the track, where the red man then crept with stealthy tread, as he pursued the forest game. Churches point their spires heavenward, and Sabbath chimes peal out their notes upon the ear of thousands, where the majestic trees of the woods then waved their leafy worship, and wild birds caroled their songs of praise. But among all the multitude who dwell there now, and with all the Christian enterprise which distinguishes the place, there are none who have done so much for it, as she who helped to lay the foundations of society there. The savor of her quiet, holy influence, remains to this day. "She hath done what she could," is doubtless her record on high.

Long before that massive warehouse was reared on the site of that first rude home, she "slept in Jesus." The *little* village mourned her, as the *great* one will never mourn another who may fall among them. Peacefully, sublimely, did the sun of life go down, and the shadows of death gather about her; and the brightest light that ever shone upon that sainted matron's face, was that which kindled with unearthly brightness the pale and dying countenance, as she whispered her faint farewells, and said,

"Life's work is finished; Saviour, take me home."

Reader, do you inquire for the "*lights*" in this domestic sketch, and marvel that over this wife's history I write not "*shadows*." Do you not see that through all her later years, she shed the steady, luminous light of the Christian wife and mother, over a home that would else have been dark, without a single sunbeam? And that light radiated to other homes. It brought cheering to many an humble one, which ignorance and sin has otherwise rendered dark and sad. Her children were all found walking in the paths of early piety.

Look ye for a "model home"—a "model husband?" Charles's wife can show you one. She sometimes naively say, "The grace of God has made him the true and noble Christian man he is; and his father's stern discipline molded him into the resolute, energetic business character, but only his mother could have so formed his habits, and molded his heart and principles, as to have produced so incomparable a husband and father."

Would you see a pattern wife and mother? Go to Mary's home—the home of which she took possession at the age of twenty-four. "The heart of *her* husband doth safely trust in her;" he has never had occasion to regret her *immaturity* of

character, nor she to bemoan a premature and uncongenial choice.

In the homes of her other children, you may see the fruit of her maternal faithfulness and wisdom—traces of her Christian *light*. That light is quenchless. Its diverging rays shall never be extinguished—but, in another sphere, they shall meet and mingle with the flood of radiance that lights that *home* where she now wonders and worships.

Does the eye of any tried, and spirit-worn, and desolate-hearted wife, trace this little sketch? Many such there are—too many, even among those whom the world calls prosperous and happy. “The heart knoweth its own bitterness,” and perhaps there is no sorrow more bitter than that which drinks up in secret the spirit of an affectionate and confiding woman, who finds, too late, that she has made a fatal mistake in her marriage choice.

Sorrowing, spirit-laden one, whatever is yours to bear, let Christian wisdom and discretion preserve you. Gather up all the sunbeams that shine, or *may be made* to shine, in your home. How often are found homes where reigns the blackness of the midnight tempest, which the wife might illumine with a chastened sunshine. If clouds must shadow your hearth-stone, strive to render them but the “light, fleecy” ones,

which dim, but do not extinguish the fires on the home-altar. And, oh! receive, what you cannot remedy, as a part of your Father's discipline. "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." Fail not to improve, for spiritual good, all heart-trials; and ever let a holy, unblemished light beam on that pathway where the spectral shadow of Disappointment glides.

Thus, through the trials of your earthly home, may you be purified and refined for that home to which God is gathering his ransomed ones, and where every necessity of the being shall be met with fullness of blessing. The way may seem rough, the night long and cheerless, and nameless and unutterable sorrows may be mingled in your cup of life; but let Christ shine through you in every dark and stormy hour, and learn ye to abide in the "Cleft of the Rock," till the "*shadows flee away.*"

Morning comes—then oh! how nameless
To thy spirit's eye will seem,
All the ills and gloomy shadows
Which have darkly hung between
Thy soul and its earnest longings—
With its shrinkings from the rod,
When thou wakest in that day-light,
In the likeness of thy God!

CHAPTER X.

THE ONLY SON.

OVER the land and home of the Pilgrims, travels Thought, the rover, to glean from fireside records wherewith "to point a moral or adorn a tale." But there are so many domestic histories laid up in memory's store-house, so many fraught with noble and hallowed associations and incitements, so many laden with mournful, solemn, or tragic warnings—heart-histories and home-histories, some "stranger than fiction"—that the pen hesitates which to select.

New England firesides! how many noble, enterprising, efficient and holy men and women have gone forth from them, scattering the light of intelligence and principle, and the influence of a wholesome *home-education* to remote sections of our own land, and in distant climes and regions. "So! they have gone forth into all the earth, and their lives unto the ends of the world," The prairie and wilderness of the West have blossomed under their hand—the isles of ocean and

the dark haunts of heathenism have been "glad for them."

Would that the highways of travel and enterprise had borne afar only seeds of blessing and progress from New England's consecrated soil! Alas! mingled with the rushing stream of life that goes forth from her valleys, plains and hillsides, are the degenerate, the weak, the selfish and the reckless—contaminators of society and contemnners of good. They dishonor the land of their birth and the memory of pious parents and holy ancestors, or scatter over stranger-soil, the legitimate fruits of pernicious domestic education.

Some go forth from pure, humble homes, where shone the light of intelligence and piety, and where parental precept and example have always pointed to the strictest integrity of principle and conduct, to reverence of God and "good will to men." They carry with them shrewd calculating intellects combined with New England courage and perseverance, as they go to seek for themselves and descendants new homes and new and enlarged spheres of activity. Perhaps they attain to places of trust and office, exerting a powerful influence on the moral and political character of new states and territories.

We look hopefully to see that influence exerted for human weal—to discover the stamp

of stern New England integrity, prudence, and patriotism upon it all.

Bethinking us of the pure domestic atmosphere breathed in the early home, we look to see that unsullied home-picture reproduced in all its fair proportions of domestic faithfulness, circumspection and providence. How often, alas! do we encounter disappointment and sorrow—how frequently behold the bitter fruits of sin!

There, is a professed Politician. *He* caters for office and its emoluments among the grog-shops and places of resort where the lowest order of manhood meet. He buys votes with money and strong drink, whispering calumny and moral poison through the thousand-tongued press. He would barter the most important interests of whole communities for place and power—for votes and office. He recklessly tramples on earth's holiest ties and relationships as if he had never been taught their sacredness or value. The slave of appetite, passion and selfishness, he may have a place on some high pinnacle of human power, but his name in the estimation of the good, is enrolled only upon the catalogue of the fallen and sensual. Yet we learn with astonishment that his early home enclosed some choice New England fireside, where morning and evening all knelt reverently at the family altar, invoking blessings from the God of households;

that his feet were early taught to go up with the worshipers to the sanctuary, and the volume of inspiration was from childhood the chief textbook for his instruction.

Remembering the promise, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," we marvel that the son of such parents has deviated so far from the paths trodden by his forefathers. Surely God is not untrue to His promises. We must seek a solution of the mystery in causes dependent on human agency, or leave its solution to the great day, when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed.

Very often might we trace in some secret under-current of parental weakness, neglect, or short-sightedness, the elements of present moral delinquency, could we know the history as developed by the fireside, the social board, and in the every-day home discipline of early years. And the parent might thus see, to his warning and dismay, that in the home of piety and worth, even by parental hands that toiled untiringly as was supposed for their children's good, had been sown seed that in after years had borne the "fruits of Sodom." Unconsciously, little by little, in indolence, or weak indulgence, or some *neglected* bias, the seeds were suffered to take root.

To such a one does the mind now revert—one

whose yet unfinished career presents to the aged parents who still lift up their tremulous voices in supplication for him, prospects unutterably dark and pregnant with nameless and multiplied anxieties.

Let us designate him Charles G——. 'Twas a pleasant little village among New England hills, where he received the gift of life. Its church spire and white houses charmed the traveler, as they greeted his view through the foliage of ancient elms, shading maples, and tall quivering poplars. A limpid river murmured over many a bed of pebbles, and wound round many a rocky ~~smoll~~, turning the wheel of industry and manufacture, and giving bustle and life to the else quiet place. It was not so large a village, but that the inhabitants could recognize in each other familiar faces. One house of worship sufficed to convene the church-going people, and there, through sunshine and storm, in one of its front square pews might always be seen on the Sabbath, the good Deacon G. and his family. He was one of the prominent men of the village, as noted for his sterling excellence as was his gentler wife for all matronly and Christian qualities. They had a large family of daughters, while only one son had ever blessed their longing hearts—before Charles was born to them—and that one died in early childhood.

The whole household rejoiced in the advent of the little Charles—and seemed, from the cradle, to enter into a combination to make him as troublesome and exacting as possible. Before he had seen a half-dozen summers, he understood, to *his own satisfaction*, that all opposition to his wishes and will was a vain thing, excepting when such opposition came from his father. There he met a stronger will than his own, and to which his must render at least an outward obedience. He was a delicate child; hence his appetite must be pampered and stimulated, so thought his fond mother, and the harder tasks his father set him, as he grew older, lightened by ill-timed assistance. There was ever before the mind of that most affectionate mother, the image of her lost boy, and the false and excessive tenderness thus nourished, led her to a course, of the tendency of which she was all unconscious, and that bore the impress of weak, short-sighted indulgence.

Especially did she exercise this false tenderness in the regulation of his sensual appetites, and in the loose discipline she exercised over his early-developed selfishness. The pleasures of the table—"good living"—became a matter of great consequence to the boy. Even his most generous acts early took on the form of self-exhibition, and lost all their force and charm unless

fed and stimulated by an appeal to some selfish principle. The fond mother erred more through weakness and ignorance than from design ; for it was the great desire of her heart that her only, her *darling* son, might live to reach, in his manhood, all that was noble and good. She daily prayed that he might become an inheritor of the grace of life, a pillar in the temple of the Lord. She instructed him from the Word of God, giving him sound precept and good counsel, but she never subdued his stubborn will or taught him *practically* the all-important habits of self-denial and the subjugation of his appetites to their proper and subordinate place. He was bright and witty, and his mother's course of training made him artful and deceitful. Did his father attempt a more rigid discipline of his industrial habits, by requiring such physical tasks of him as other boys of his age performed, a few frowns and tears, or a little well-timed tardiness in their execution, would command the sympathetic assistance of mother and sisters. Was the table spread with viands which did not for the occasion suit his fancy, he had no difficulty in obtaining some dish, prepared expressly for himself and exactly to his liking. Did a little illness visit him, it was an all-sufficient excuse for ill-temper and exacting peevishness.

The good Deacon and his wife were more fre-

quently at variance in their views respecting Charles, than upon any other subject during their long and harmonious union.

"You'll certainly spoil that boy, mother; he'll be good for nothing, I'm afraid. Do let him wait on himself—on you and the girls, too, and not let him think the house is kept for his convenience and comfort. I do hate to see a boy expect his mother and sisters to do his work and wait on him. Shame on such unmanliness," would the old Deacon say. Nethertheless the maternal discipline was never more than modified; it continued fundamentally the same.

It was the strong desire of his parents that he should be liberally educated, and that he consecrate a cultivated mind to the sacred ministry. He manifested an early aptness for learning, and parents and sisters made great sacrifices that he might enjoy the best advantages for education. But even such sacrifices he received more as a matter of right than with appropriate gratitude. His course of reading and study was like everything else, more influenced by what he loved and wanted, than by what he ought to do. Still, with all his selfishness and self-indulgence, there was a certain smartness and ambition which gave promise of some kind of success in life.

His youth was sullied by no excesses in the eye of society, though while yet a very young

man his epicurean tastes bore upon them the insignia of vice.

His parents prayed, hoped, and wondered that he was not converted to God; but the years glided by and he left his native village to try his chosen profession of law in the new and inviting West; and there went with him thither his youthful bride—the flower of her native valley—the gem of a dear New England home.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ONLY SON.

Concluded.

THE curtains of night are gathered about the habitations of men. A wild storm is raging in a western city, and all who can be are sheltered in their homes. In a comfortable house within its precincts sits a young and interesting-looking lady, upon whose face you may trace lines of deep sensibility, also marks of care and anxiety. The fire burns brightly on the hearth, and over the room presides an air of order and taste; while several children of different ages are playing and reading there. A pale, sick babe is moaning upon the mother's lap, while savory odors from the kitchen betoken the preparation of rich viands. The mother frequently lays the sick child in the cradle, while she gives a few moments' inspection and supervision to the progressing supper.

"Oh, dear!" says little Eddie, "I *do* wish father would come, I am *so* hungry, I want my supper."

"So do I," says Julia; "I am tired waiting,

and I want to go to bed too ; but mother has got our hair curled so nicely, and wants us to sit up and eat with pa, and so I will *try* to think about something else, and wait."

"I am afraid pa will not come, it storms so," said the sweet-faced Mary, "and I am afraid he will almost freeze if he tries to come, and that would be worse than waiting for our supper."

The husband and father of this little group had been from home some weeks, canvassing the state of his adoption during an exciting political campaign.

He had written them that he should be there on that Saturday evening, and they had been anxiously looking for him some time. The wife had prepared for him *the welcome*, which she knew by experience would be most acceptable to him, viz.—*a good supper*. At length the long-expected whistle announced the arrival of the cars, and soon after a portly man, with a flushed face, entered the house. There was a general hum of welcome which he met with a hasty kiss to each, and "Well, wife! how have you got along? Baby sick, eh? I am sorry—poor little fellow, how much he is sick! Do you manage him rightly, Mary?" This very comforting inquiry was accompanied by a pat upon the cheek of the sleeping child, which was either so ungentle or the hand of the father so cold that

it awoke him from his feverish sleep with screams of terror. While the mother was vainly endeavoring to soothe him into quiet, her husband divested himself of overcoat, etc., warmed his benumbed fingers by the blaze for a few moments, and then, with a little impatience of tone, inquired if supper was not ready ; adding, "I am well nigh starved."

"So are we too, pa," exclaimed little voices. "We have been waiting *ever so long* for you to come to eat supper with us."

"Let us wait no longer then ; come, wife ;" but immediately added, "I should hardly have thought you would have arranged to have all these children eat their supper with us, for you know when *I* am hungry and tired I don't like to have half-a-dozen hungry children to wait upon. Come, Mary, *do* let Bridget take that child, she can tend to his crying just as well as you. There is no telling when a child will ever be pleased to stop, when once he begins to cry, and I am too hungry to wait supper longer, and too tired to hear a crying baby to-night—so come along, wife," he repeated, as the mother lingered still for a moment's more effort at soothing.

"Hope you have something inviting to eat, or I shall be sorry I did not stop at the hotel for supper, I have had miserable fare round the country, nothing fit to eat, I assure you," and the

portly man caressed his whiskers and deposited himself at the head of the table with the air of one who considered himself the chief personage in the house.

The dishes prepared were much to his epicurean taste. "Really, Mary, *this* is nice, the first *really-comfortable* meal I have had for weeks." A smile of satisfaction kindled the almost tearful face of the wife, which, however, quickly faded when he added, "Why can't Bridget come and wait on these children?—they trouble *me*." "Bridget has the babe, *I* will attend to them," she replied, and so the father prosecuted his sumptuous meal without farther interruptions. He did not even notice that his weary, jaded wife, did not taste a mouthful. How *could* she eat? The warm outgushings of her heart were chilled, and ever and anon from the adjoining room fell upon her maternal ear the still-unquieted sob of the sick infant.

When the children were all in bed, the infant soothed to his night's repose, and the various cares of a housekeeper, who has but one domestic, attended to, Mary seated herself by the side of her husband, hoping for a little social chat. Comfortably ensconced in wrapper and slippers, with his feet upon the fender, and the evening paper thrown over his face, he was dozing in his easy chair. His wife timidly aroused him and

asked him of his tour and success, but he replied, "I'm too tired to talk to-night—*clear jaded out*—chilled through, I wish you would get me something hot to drink, and have my bed warmed, Mary, I do believe I feel most sick."

Mary made him some hot ginger-tea, and prepared to warm his bed while he sipped it, but when she presented it to him, he received it with perfect disgust. "Why, Mary, you don't think I want such slops, do you? Make me a good, strong glass of hot 'sling;' come, wife, don't be foolish." But the pent-up tears would gush, and she could not restrain her timid but heartfelt remonstrance. "O, Charles! you promised me you would not drink 'sling' and such things any more. What *would* your father say if he knew you did?"

"I *must drink some*, Mary or give up politics; but *I* do not drink enough to hurt me, only to keep up appearances with 'the dear people.'"

"Then, O, do give up politics, for I am sure we had a much happier home, before you meddled with them, than we have had since."

"You *women* don't know anything of such things. I tell you, Mary, I am on the high road to success. I shall go to Washington some day, or do some other great thing of which you will be proud."

"I shall be prouder if I can make home

attractive, and make you happy in it," she replied.

"Well then, begin by getting me what I want—a good glass of hot sling; I really *need* it. Physicians say we must in this country use not only tonics, but stimulants. Come, that's a good wife," and seeing her still hesitate, he added with some energy, "I'll get it myself, or call Bridget, if *you* do not."

Mary turned sadly away and prepared the beverage. When she returned, tears filled her eyes, which her husband perceiving, asked her with a tone of annoyance, "Don't you suppose I know what and how much I need? I should think you expected a little 'sling' was going to make a drunkard of me."

Mary made no reply, but turned to prepare his bed, and when he was comfortably deposited there, and his last want, imaginary or real, attended to, by his patient, weary wife, she sat down by the fireside to muse awhile. Bright visions of earlier day-dreams gleamed through the mists of care, weariness, and anxiety—and also sweet memories of the dear, old New England home, the fond, venerated parents, the noble, manly brothers, the tender, considerate sisters, and *all* that she *forsook* when she became *a wife*.

Then there floated before her mind, like the

vision of a sweet slumber, the tenderness, freshness, and warmth of that *stronger love*, which won her from all this to a home in the West, to be molded and modeled, as she hoped, after the pattern of that early home among the granite hills. How strong a prop she *supposed* she had, upon which to lean in every emergency, and in her isolation from the friends of her childhood, in the husband of her love—the strong man in intellect and principles. The sunshine of gentle, exclusive affection, of fond and thoughtful attentions, gilded the picture ; and evenings, sacred to love and social intercourse, when plans for the future were discussed by the glowing hearthstone, and the acts of each day were submitted by the husband to the approval or disapproval of the wife. She mused not long thus, ere the picture was dimmed and clouded in its coloring—then deeper shadows flitted over it, till only occasional flashes of warmth and sunshine lent their glow to its sombre hues. Delicate, considerate attentions were intermitted, then, gradually abandoned—such attentions as an affianced expects of course—as a wife only fully values and appreciates. Social evenings were shortened, then they returned at longer and longer intervals, till at length they scarcely came at all. Ambition, love of gain, the society of the club-room, bar-room, and *political* friends came more and

more visibly between the husband, and his wife and home. As his own cares and attentions to that home decreased, so did his exactions from it increase. Thus the shadows deepened and darkened, till the wife gradually attained the settled conviction that the chief, almost the only attraction of his home, was its power to minister to his physical care and comfort. Often did he enter it with his breath laden with the fumes generated by the social glass, and to the remonstrances of the sensitive, anxious wife, he would reply with promises or excuses, which he well knew were neither sincere nor truthful. Then the early-neglected seeds of selfishness, self-will, and domination began to bear the fruits of discomfort and heart-sorrow, in that home which he, the husband and the head, should have guarded with watchful love. Failing to be true to a noble manhood there, how could he be truly great or noble anywhere?

From the commencement of her married life, Mary had perceived one flaw in his domestic education, which, while it gave her great uneasiness oftentimes, still afforded her an opportunity to exert her powers to please and gratify him. The pleasures of the table had ever seemed to have an undue influence over his mind. No amount of domestic care or labor—sick children, weary, half-sick wife, or incompetent domestics,


presented a sufficient excuse for a dinner that did not minister abundantly to his gustatory pleasures. Nothing had so much power to cloud his brow, or dim the brightness of his approving smile, even in their "earlier, better day," than mistakes or omissions in preparations for the table. As the years increased, so did the demands upon the culinary skill of his household. Mary was in one sense *obliged* to exercise her intellect and skill, her care and attention, more frequently, constantly, and acutely in this, than in any other department of domestic duty. The unsensual mind can easily perceive that this was neither an ennobling nor improving influence in a family—that it did not tend to promote enlarged or desirable habits of thought in a wife and mother.

Nevertheless, Mary found in an early experience that it was a necessary oil upon the waters of *her* domestic life. Whatever else must be curtailed or brought within the bounds of economy, the creature-comforts and luxuries of the table belonged not to the list—neither, in fact, did anything that was essential to his own personal comfort. But with such increasing demands upon his home, Charles G. never augmented, but, on the other hand, constantly lessened *his* cares, attentions, and ministrations to its comfort.

He was a "growing man"—was traveling the high road to distinction and influence. What his *party* and his political friends thought of him, was fast becoming of more consequence, than how his *wife* thought and felt. He was fast attaining to that elevated position that is not unknown on some of those high roads of ambition where men travel—that position where a man may look down upon the claims and cares of domestic obligation, and give himself wholly up to those of public life, individual promotion and self-gratification.

When the politician, or one wholly absorbed in any other ambitious scheme, reaches that eminence, he finds food for the *affections* entirely secondary to other considerations, and a disposition or even ability to minister to such human cravings in his own family, among the things that are not, if ever they were.

How little did he of whom we write understand or appreciate the fervent yearnings for love and sympathy to which his gentle wife was a prey? How little did he realize what priceless wealth he was bartering for a poor "mess of pottage." Deluded man! Thou art drifting on to shipwreck. The rocks of ruin lie thick in the track before thee. Wife, home, affections, peace of mind, what pertains to thy higher manhood are imperceptibly receding from thy grasp. Thou



wilt look back upon them all from the dark future, and their light will twinkle upon thy bleared vision, like distant stars shining through fog and mist.

Home—what a theatre for noble receptive and communicative influences! 'Tis the noblest of schools—in importance above and beyond all others for the fullest developments of manhood and womanhood. The man or woman who unmoors from its safe anchorage to sail their bark upon the restless tide of ambition, fashion, or mis-named pleasure, will seek in vain so peaceful or so blessed a haven. Who may slight or despise this institution of our gracious God, and be guiltless in His sight? Who that fails in the discharge of obligations and duties there, may lay just claim to *true* honor and nobility?

When Mary G., with her sick babe upon her arm, laid her head upon her pillow that night, it was soon wet with tears that *would* not be repressed. Poor wife! the day is not far distant when thy tears will be more bitter and hopeless—yea, when *no* tears will come to relieve thy surcharged heart.

'Tis another night of storm and tempest, but a few years later. Mary, poor, neglected, and almost alone, is dying. Her husband is in Washington, "legislating for the interests of his country." The wronged wife has passed from one

degree of heart-grief and blighting sorrow to another, till she has drained the last dregs in the cup of bitterness. What the wife of the drunkard, the debauchee, the trifler with woman's honor, the guest in harlots' houses suffers—had the tender-hearted Mary suffered. But the scenes of her probation are almost over. She is a harmless maniac now, for reason's last glimmering ray went out in idiotic darkness, when her husband's mistress was introduced to the home where herself and her children dwelt. Care and toil, unstimulated by the uplifting influence of conjugal love and sympathy, together with grief and disease, have early accomplished their work, and God is about to take the worn and tried spirit to its rest. There is a better home for it, and amid darkness and wailing tempests it is nearing that home, where it may abide *in peace—forever*.

Though hope and faith—though courage and strength had often well-nigh died out of her woman heart, while the light of reason glimmered, she had, to the best of her knowledge and ability, been a true and faithful wife and mother. To her vow at the altar, "for better or worse," she had never been recreant, though he to whom she plighted her faith had been false to her.

As he labored up the hill of political promotion, and his "away-from-home expenses" were increased, she exercised the most self-denying

economy, dispensing with every personal comfort and convenience possible, to sustain *his* respectability and contribute to his comfort.

She made herself almost a domestic slave to minister to his table comforts. As the magnet of vice drew him farther and farther from the attractions of home—as she saw it yearly becoming more and more his place of *convenience* rather than of *choice*, she put forth more and more vigorously and ingeniously her efforts to bind him there with the cords of love. But when disease and prostration incapacitated her to minister to him, he introduced *another* to that home in such a way as to unbalance the already-enfeebled mind. Then he left her to the care of hirelings and became too much absorbed in the “welfare of his country” and in the busy, exciting scenes of a Congressional session at Washington, to give his attention to a poor, sick, demented wife, who could not longer contribute to his comfort. Perhaps he did not like to look upon that wan, blank face, lest he should there read what would minister to his self-reproach—perhaps he considered his time too valuable to be spent in cherishing and watching over a helpless wife. Bright eyes watched for and greeted the talented Mr. G., in halls of fashion and gayety in the nation’s capitol. High-born ladies, enrobed in jeweled elegance, bowed their graceful recog-

nitions, as he passed them in the public promenade. Those who gathered round convivial boards at sumptuous suppers, welcomed the jovial and witty man. But the lowly flowers of beauty and innocence were crushed and blighted in his pathway, and silent stars looked often upon bacchanalian orgies and gentle breezes which fan the brow of night, bore towards the dome above, songs of revelry and debauch.

Why should the country lose the benefit of talents such as his? Why should he close his ear to the clarion notes of fame, to listen to the low, plaintive wail of a broken-hearted wife? Why should the monitions of conscience disturb the quiet of a soul, steeped in sensual delights? Ah, let ambition and deceit, selfishness and vice, paralyze all its nobler faculties. Let conscience dwindle away and become almost obliterated. Its day of awakening is only a little hence, in the untried future. There are thunder-tones that will arouse it, to slumber no more forever. There are patient faces and mournful entreaties, that will haunt it like a presence through coming retribution. There are dark and secret paths of unsuspected crime and dishonor, where those feet have trodden, upon which is yet to flash, the all-revealing light of eternity. Oh! there is an award for prostituted powers, for trampled and despised obligations, for ruthlessly-sundered ties,

for a life of selfishness and sin. There is retribution, even in this life—but that laid up in store against another, what pen may attempt to delineate?

It is thought by some, that a good, true, and loving wife, has, generally, power to retain an essentially-restraining influence over a husband that is not far gone in ways of vice when he is married. So it often is, and furthermore many a one has been reclaimed and saved through the prayers, discreet influence, and winning affection of a wife, whose feet had learned to tread in devious paths before there was a home and wife for them. Noble traits have thus been developed under such home-culture, which might else have never been recognized. But it is a dangerous field of operation, and greater are the chances of failure than of success. But when a woman weds herself to one, the foundations of whose character are laid in sensuality, however refined, and in a self-will and selfishness, whose ramifications extend into every department of character, I care not what his parentage, position, or prospects in life—such a one weds to her certain sorrow!

Circumstances may restrain a man essentially ignoble within the bounds of external respectability, but nevertheless, the wife that dwells with him in his home shall have many a heart-ache—

many a rueful hour. But let circumstances favor, and temptation assail, and society—the public, may learn, perhaps with surprise, of what material he is made. Perhaps, they may think he has just stumbled and fallen, when, alas! he fell in his boyhood—under the care and eye of his mother—he fell, and has never since arisen.

Fathers—would you have your daughters wedded only to true representatives of a noble type of manhood? Then teach them the value of such a manhood. Teach them to discriminate—and how to discern it, irrespective of the quality of the broadcloth it wears. Teach them to appreciate it, though it offers no incense of flattery on the altar of vanity. Teach them also that it is far better to go through life in “single blessedness” than to marry below such a standard.

Mothers—would you have your sons noble models in all the relations of life? Take heed what you sow, and what habits you culture in their pliant childhood. If selfishness, self-indulgence, and low sensual pleasures are scattered as seed upon the virgin soil, surely the future shall yield its legitimate harvest, and gentle, loving hearts may reap it in sorrow and anguish. Verily “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,”

HOME WHISPERS.



PART II.

TO WIVES AND MOTHERS.



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TO WIVES AND MOTHERS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

DOMESTIC life, in some of its various phases, makes up life's sum, to the great mass of our sex. To fail of love, honor, peace and happiness, in her domestic relationships, is with most women, to make a *failure of life*. Therefore marriage is to her a great event—the great event of her life, for in her success or failure there, is involved almost her all of earthly weal or woe.

Man has his outer life—his business world—his schemes, ambitions, character and position before his fellows. Domestic life is to him more of an adornment or an appendage—often, more a means to success and personal comfort, than the end of his aims or the sum of his life. Not that men do not love their homes and families—nor that they do not transact business, grasp after wealth, and toil and jostle in the marts of trade

that they may lavish their gains upon those who belong to them—nor that a man's life is but half a life who has an uncongenial home, and an unloving atmosphere at his own board and hearthstone.

But the most superficial observer of society must perceive, that man does not *love* as woman does—that a life darkened by domestic discords, and saddened by fatal mistakes, is not to him the utter failure that it is to her.

There is not as much of this life's all, staked upon "the cast of the die," for the one as for the other. "Exceptions," here as elsewhere, do but "prove the rule."

Man we believe is more dependent on healthful home-influences, for his higher, spiritual and moral development, than is woman. She, far oftener than he, is driven *to* instead of *from* the "Fountain of living waters," when the broken cisterns of earth are empty and dry.

But before the world she lives and shines, if at all, through those she loves—through husband, father, sons or brothers. The world of affection is her world; the domain of home, her empire; the success of those to whom she is allied, her ambition.

The glory of a true woman, is the glory that encircles her in her own home, that streams out from that home through the door-ways, from

which go out to the busy world, husband and children. It consists in the bright but mellowed radiance—the unseen but resistless influences which pervade and emanate from that “inner sanctuary,” when woman understands her true dignity as priestess and ministering spirit. It is augmented by all the attractiveness, grace, wisdom, love, nobleness of soul, fineness of perception and facility of adaptation, with which a cultivated, refined or pious woman may make her legitimate contributions to social life.

Did our sex realize the power they might wield by the conversations of social life, methinks they would be more studious in the cultivation of conversational powers, and more solicitous that their influence tell upon the elevation of society.

Of the talents that made Mesdames Roland and De Stael so conspicuous, influential, and feared, perhaps none were more potent than those they wielded, when the pen was laid aside, and in the drawing-room or boudoir, they met the leading minds of France in social converse. To this day her Emperor and peasants, feel the influence of those ideas and expressions, which had their birth and development in the *Salons* where woman presided and gave tone to the coteries of those troublous times.

To make a good and happy home for a noble

man, and to rear in it a family of sons and daughters, so that they shall be a *real acquisition* to the generation in which they live, is a work of responsibility and honor, to task the highest order of capacity. To meet wisely and well the claims of society, affords also scope for capacity of mind and heart. They are claims which the wife and mother should not ignore, if she would *do* the most and *be* the most in her home.

We fearlessly assert, that she who makes home so pure, peaceful and holy a place, that the companion of her life is fain to acknowledge that within its charmed atmosphere his manhood grows stronger, purer, and more elevated—that he goes out from it as from a stronghold of virtue, with a truer reverence for a *true* woman, and a deeper detestation of vice; with a kindlier heart and readier hand for the weak and sorrowing; with a more rational ambition and moderated desires for the grosser things of life and the world—is in her highest, noblest, most legitimate sphere. Such a woman wields an influence, which would never be augmented by added political rights or by official trust and power.

Then to be a *mother*—what a trust—what an honor! Fresh from the hand of the Father of spirits, to woman's hand, heart, and care, are committed the tender plants of immortality. Think of it, mothers, amid the weariness and

anxieties that attend you, and let it invest the oft-recurring *details* of your labor with dignity and importance. Who hath need of strength and wisdom from on high, like unto the mother? Surely no governor or state official. To whom are culture, largeness of soul, decision, discrimination, fortitude, patience, self-forgetfulness, and "love unfeigned," indispensable, if not to her? Who needs energy and strength, and she doth not? Who has claims for a considerate sympathy in the family circle, like unto her claims? And whom can society least afford to have forsake their post, and come down from their high position, to rake among the rubbish of worldly ambition, political honors, or the follies and trifles of fashion, if not the wives and mothers of this eventful day and generation?

If these things are so, how important to woman is the study of all that influences her happiness or usefulness in domestic relations! And with what caution should she ponder the steps that lead her to the altar where she takes the marriage-vow.

If the divine, the lawyer, the physician and the business man make their professions a constant study, why should not the wife and mother hers also?

Most of our homes, fall far short of what they should be, and of what they *might* be. There is

many a "little box that goeth up to spoil the vines," "for our vines have tender grapes." There is ignorance and physical weakness. There are wasted and uncultivated moral powers—graces and adornments unstudied and unexercised. There is neglected self-control. There are low aims, narrow views, dwarfed and warped characters, belittled and selfish souls. Then there is peevishness, repining, gloom, and unbelief, where there should be Christian heroism, beaming hope, generous love, and heaven's glad sunshine lighting up the darkest corners of care and toil—even of disappointment and ill. These and many more evils, choke the growth of the beautiful and true in our earthly homes. How much husbands and fathers are at fault for unhappy homes, it is not a present purpose to inquire.

I propose now to *whisper* a few suggestions to wives and mothers, touching qualities and habits that give character to their home-life. These suggestions will be mostly by narrative and illustration—episodes in domestic histories, gleanings from the great volume of social life, which is ever open for perusal.

If these whispers shall come to any homes, with aught of value, either in suggestion or warning to the wives and mothers who receive them—if they add even a *little* to the influences

that tend to sanctify and beautify the domestic relationships of her, who, "by the hearthstone, rocks the cradle of the nation," then shall the hours spent in their penning, be reckoned among the enriched and golden hours of life.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO STEP-MOTHERS.

"*Court that day lost, whose low, descending sun
Views from thy hand no worthy action done.*"

"How are you, Mrs. Jones, this cold morning?" inquired a motherly, pleasant-looking woman. "I was afraid you were sick, as I had seen none of you for so long."

"I did not know as *you* or *any* one cared whether I was dead or alive," was the somewhat tart reply.

"Why, are you sick?" inquired her neighbor, not appearing to notice her disturbed air.

"I am about as good as sick; I should be on the bed if I had a chance, I am not fit to be around, and the weather is dreadful," and she shrugged her shoulders, and assumed a look clearly indicative that she considered some one to blame for all her discomforts of mind and body.

"I did not expect others to come in to see me," she continued, "for I owe every one calls, but I did not think *you* would be so ceremonious."

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"Well," replied Mrs. Brown, very cheerfully, "I have intended, every day to run in, but I have had no 'help' for some time, and all the children go to school. When I could get out, there have been so many calls for my attentions, among the poor and sick, that I have been obliged to neglect my less unfortunate neighbors. There's poor Mrs. Quimby, who is very sick, and last night her oldest girl was taken down, and she has no one to do anything for her or the baby, excepting her little girl ten years old, only when some neighbor drops in. I am on my way there now, and thought I would run in, and see how you was, and if you would not like to go round there with me this morning."

The one addressed was a spare woman, of about forty-five. There were many and deep-seated wrinkles on her brow, which contrasted strongly with the fair, smooth one of Mrs. Brown, who had numbered about as many winters and summers in life as herself. Her tones were pitched to that tune, the key-note of which is fretfulness, while her whole aspect was that of one who considered herself of the abused, unfortunate ones of earth.

"Come, put on your cloak and hood, and go round with me, and let's get things put to rights a little for the poor woman. Come, it will make your own home-comforts and blessings seem

brighter, to look upon her condition, besides doing her a kindness."

You should have seen Mrs. Jones' look of blank astonishment, when thus urged to go out in the cold, and do for others, in this way, just as she was beginning a long catalogue of her own physical ills.

"Why, bless me, Mrs. Brown! I am not able to take care of my own family; I tell you I am miserable, not fit to be off the bed. My nerves are all unstrung; I did not sleep half the night last night. Once I should not have tried to keep up, but married women, who have step-daughters, can never get a *chance* to give up and be sick."

"I sometimes think it is well we do not have time to think about all our bad feelings," replied Mrs. B. "We must have infirmities as we advance in life, but it aggravates little ills to dwell much upon them. We live longer, and get along better, my dear Mrs. Jones, the more we have occasion to forget our own bad feelings."

"Oh! it will do for you to talk so, for you are never sick. But if you had all to contend with that *I* do, I guess you would sing a different tune. I don't believe you know what a sick or tired feeling is."

"Don't you?" replied Mrs. B., with a most amused smile.

"No, I don't; at least, I never hear you complain. You are always in good spirits and health, and if anything should happen to you I do believe your children would be willing almost to break their necks to wait on you. *You* don't know what the trials of a step-mother are!" she exclaimed with one of those dolorous expressions of countenance with which her acquaintances had become quite familiar, when the subject of "bringing up other people's children," was under discussion. "Now I am most worn out," she continued, "and my husband and the family will find it out pretty soon. They don't seem to know or care now, but I think they will have some reflections by-and-by. They will learn when I am gone what I have done, and what they have had to lean on, and it won't be long before they will find it out too."

"Why, Mrs. Jones, are you seriously sick? Is your health worse than it has been? What *is* the matter?" inquired her friend, in tones of sympathy, while yet a playful smile crept round the corners of her mouth.

"I am wearing out," she replied, very emphatically, and with a burst of tears; "I am wearing out, body and mind. I have more to do than any six women ought to do, and more care than any man has a right to put upon his wife—at least if he cares anything about her. But men

don't care much about their wives, I believe, only to get as much benefit from them as possible. They are a sort of necessary convenience, and the advantages are all on one side. There is not one man in twenty that knows how to treat a wife, or make a family comfortable. They can sell goods, make bargains, and attend to business, and if they stand pretty well out of doors, they don't care how things fare in the house, provided they are made comfortable, and too many demands are not made upon their purses. I tell you, women are fools to marry. I wish I had known as much as I do now, years ago."

This outburst did not at all astonish or disconcert Mrs. Brown. She had been privy to similar ones before. Under the guise of indiscriminate and unperturbed good nature, she possessed a vein of deep Christian philosophy. She replied naught to her friend in direct moral aphorisms, deeming a change of objects and a little fresh air better alternatives, under existing circumstances. So she got up, bustled about to find her cloak and over-shoes for her, and with a cheerful "Come, just run over with me to Mrs. Q.'s a little while," she fairly constrained her into the enterprise of starting, despite her multiplied objections, on the score of inability, dinner to get, garments to finish, mending to do, etc., etc.

She had tried her moral prescriptions upon her unhappy neighbor before. She knew, both from observation and experience, that it would do the sore heart and soured temper good, to look for a little upon scenes beyond its own domestic circle—to take a peep at the experience of those whose struggles and sorrows were greater, whose toils and cares more numerous and wearing, and whose comforts were far less in number.

Against her will, and before she was aware, Mrs. Jones found herself in the street, walking at a brisk pace toward the abode of sickness and poverty. The poor woman had not been out of her house before for two weeks—not even to church—she had found “so much to do,” and it had been “so cold.” No wonder she was “*nervous*.”

The fresh air exhilarated her. The merry jingle of sleigh-bells, cheerful nods of recognition, and the brilliant scene of jeweled splendor presented by the wintry landscape, under the pure bright rays of the winter sun, all conspired to change the current of her feelings, and to scatter, for a little, the clouds of complaint from her horizon. Amusement, variety, was what she needed. A walk of about twenty minutes brought them to the door of one of those abodes of human want and wretchedness, a description of which we will not attempt. It was one of

those places misnamed homes, where a feeble, but pious and estimable woman was a victim of sickness, to which were added, cold, hunger, desolation and poverty, such as they know who are the mothers of helpless little ones and wives to brutish men, who love the grog-shop and drunken revelry, better than wife and children. It was one of those plague-spots which society suffers to fester upon her bosom, because she has not yet attained a growth of love, wisdom, and moral energy, sufficient to apply to them some potential cauterization.

The visitors found everything within, in the confusion and disorder that sickness and poverty would necessarily create; but the room soon assumed a different aspect, under the skillful efficiency of the two. Mrs. Jones seemed to have forgotten all about her own trouble, in her zeal to "get things to rights," while Mrs. Brown, in her own cheerful way, had the invalids and their bed rejoicing in the refreshment of clean linen, produced from the depths of a large basket, which, unperceived by her neighbor, she had carried under her cloak. That same basket contained, also, sundry edibles, which had a most quieting influence upon the hungry little ones. Medicines were administered, drinks prepared and set within reach, and with a few cheering, encouraging words, and the promise

from Mrs. B., of running in again before bedtime, they prepared to leave. While Mrs. J. was muffling herself for contact with the out-of-doors air, Mrs. B. slipped quietly out, and returned with an armful of nicely-split wood, with which she replenished the fire, and before the sick woman could express her astonishment, she came in with another, and yet another. Promising the little girl who had the baby, a present, if she was very careful not to let the fire go down, she threw on her own things and was soon ready to return with her empty basket. It was not quite empty, for it contained little aprons and other garments that needed the wash-tub and a few patches.

As she took her leave, the sick woman asked with streaming eyes, where she found that wood. "I thought the children had picked up the last stick when you came in." "Oh! it has just come," was the reply, "and from some one who was able and willing to send it, too; so don't worry, my dear Mrs. Quimby."

"His bounty will provide—
His saints securely dwell;
The Hand that bears creation up,
Shall guard his children well."

A look of inexpressible gratitude was her reply, and when the sufferer said, "I cannot bear to see *a lady* bring in wood for me—why did

you not let the children do it!" Mrs. B. answered cheerfully :

"Oh! they would keep the door open on you too much. That's a trifle; I don't mind it, and you need not, for I don't call myself a 'lady,' I am only a woman;" and she disappeared with the closing door, like a sunbeam that had shone down for a moment into some dark and cob-webbed corner of human desolation.

But the dark place was not as dark as before, and through the sorrow-laden atmosphere, there floated the aroma of human sympathy and heavenly love, and the poor, struggling, suffering woman looked up to her "Father in heaven," with a grateful and a lightened heart.

"Who sent that great load of wood, so nicely split up?" Mrs. Jones inquired, as they passed out of the yard. "Was it your husband?"

"No," said Mrs. B., "it was yours."

"*Mine?* How came *he* to send wood to any one or to trouble himself about any such thing? It's more than I can do, to get him to attend, as he ought, to his own wood-pile."

"I met him in the street on my way to your house, and told him of Mrs. Q.'s destitution and he said the church should look after her, and not let her suffer. He offered to send a load of wood round, and to interest himself for her comfort. The first you see he has done very promptly, and

the latter he will the better do, the more you help him."

"Well, I am glad if he attends to any one's requests promptly. I should have to begin a week beforehand, and tease him every time he came into the house, in order to get a load of wood or anything else brought to me."

There was a mingled expression of vexation and gratification in Mrs. Jones' face as she said this. She seemed to be considering deeply some subject, till she reached her own door. Mrs. Brown went in a moment, to warm, and Mrs. J. broke forth again :

"My husband is a queer man ; I don't know as I understand him. He seems to have the kindest of hearts sometimes, and to be the most obliging of men to every one but me."

"Your husband is a man of many most excellent and noble traits of character. His virtues so out-number his faults, that you can well afford to rejoice in the former, and bear very wisely and patiently with the latter. His is a character to *cultivate*, my dear Mrs. Jones, and it is *worth* cultivating, too."

"I sometimes think I do not know how to manage him," responded Mrs. Jones. "Now I'll warrant, something will be wrong about the dinner, or that it has been spoilt by that stupid girl of mine ; if so, no matter how badly he sees me

feel, or how fretted I am with it, he won't say or do one thing to make me feel better, but will very likely eat a few mouthfuls and go out of the house in a way to make me feel ten times worse, and then I shall say things I am sorry for, and wish I had stayed at home."

"Maybe he is more disturbed by your ruffled spirit, on such occasions, than by the poor dinner. If I have been unfortunate in the arrangement or preparation of a meal, I take extra pains to have everything else right and pleasant, and to make up in social cheer, for what the table may lack in material comforts and attractions."

Mrs. Brown went home to hasten her own dinner arrangements, that husband and children, as they returned from business and school, might not suffer inconvenience on account of her charities. Mr. Brown was one of those very punctual men, who could never be made to understand any reason why a housekeeper should not always have everthing done in just the right time, and in a manner to just suit the master of the household. He always did his part, he said, in providing, and it was a woman's place to do the rest, and to do it up promptly and systematically. Mrs. Brown was one of those wives who thought it a much less evil to take a good deal of trouble to be exact and punctual in her family arrangements, than to irritate or annoy her husband. So

the luxury of doing good to her neighbors seldom interfered with her well-calculated and systematized arrangements at home.

O woman ! in the multitude of thy petty cares, how much mayest thou glean of moral discipline, to elevate, purify, and beautify thy life ! or how dwarfed, petty, circumscribed, and ignobly selfish, may they render thy character !

The dross or the fine gold, is thine to choose !

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO STEP-MOTHERS.

Continued.

"CHARITY is twice blest;
It blesses him that gives,
And him who doth receive."

Mrs. Jones' dinner happened to be well cooked, notwithstanding her short absence. Her nervous headache had disappeared; her husband was in the most genial of humors; and her own lot, when contrasted with Mrs. Quimby's, seemed to possess some redeeming features. There were no frettings or complaints that day at the dinner-table. The atmosphere that pervaded it was infectious, and was carried by the children to the school-house, and by the husband to the store. Mrs. Quimby and her little ones, and other needy families, were remembered in many kind *resolves*, touching their welfare. Thus when we go out of our own narrow circle of trial and feeling, pouring out our sympathies beyond it, we often cure our own ills.

When Mr. Jones took his hat to leave the

house after dinner, he said very pleasantly to his wife, "This is the best dinner we have had for a long time ; I should like such a one every day."

"Why, I did not know you were so very fond of *beans*," she replied in surprise.

"It's not the *beans*, but the *sauce*, I like so well," he answered with some emphasis, as he passed out.

"Now what *does* he mean by *sauce*, I wonder," thought Mrs. Jones, as she applied herself to her domestic avocations. "Sauce for baked beans ! Mr. Jones *is* a queer man !" Then Mrs. Brown and her character passed in review before her mind, and she concluded *she* was a queer woman. She knew that she could spare any neighbor or friend she had, better than she could Mrs. B. She was fully convinced that she was one of the best women in the world ; but there was something quite incomprehensible about her. She never seemed to be sick or tired, or to have any of the troubles most people had, and she concluded she was a remarkably-fortunate woman, with whom the world went quite smoothly, and that when things *were* a little rough they did not trouble her so much as they did more *sensitive* people.

Did you never, dear reader, meet with one of those regular *fretters*, in whose woof of life the *dark threads* were always conspicuous, and who

ever dignified their complaints with the appellation of "*sensitiveness*?" And did you never notice that their friends and neighbors, who possessed the grace of meekness and quietness of spirit, always lacked, in their estimation, acute sensibilities?

Mrs. Jones, in the course of her reflections, came to the conclusion that her neighbor had very few, if any, trials in her husband—she had certainly never heard her allude to any—and that, as to the trials of a step-mother, she knew nothing about them. She was prone to forget, as were community, and even Mrs. Brown and the children themselves, that she was step-mother to the goodly number of ten rosy-cheeked, restless, bread-and-butter-loving and patience-taxing boys and girls. Perhaps it was because she forgot they were not her own, that made her cares sit less heavily upon her than they otherwise would. It is possible, if Mrs. Jones could have been a little more oblivious to the fact in her own case, her cares and duties might have been sometimes less onerous.

A little farther sketch of the domestic histories of Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Brown, may be suggestive to others sustaining the same family relations which they did.

Every one who knew Mrs. Jones, knew her history. They knew just what an orderly, quiet,

comfortable home she left to take care of a family of indolent, ungrateful children, who did not love her or even feel thankful for her care.

She had told it over and over by snatches and scraps to almost every intimate friend she had in the town. She had doled out her troubles and her step-children's faults, in mysterious whispers at the sewing society, in social gatherings, and in the neighborly *tete-a-tete*. The complaints had come back to her children's ears, often distorted and exaggerated, and tended strongly to keep in their remembrance that they had a step-mother. Wrinkles were a fixture upon her brow; and there was ever an expression upon her countenance of long-suffering, injured endurance. The very tones of her voice seemed to convey to the listener her consciousness of the mistake she made in marrying as she did, and to ask a recognition of the fact that she was a much-abused woman, whose trials were more aggravated than other people's—one with whom everything went wrong.

Mrs. Jones really had trials, and some peculiar ones. She had those common to her position, as well as many growing out of her own and her husband's peculiar temperaments, and habits the children had acquired during the years that intervened between their own mother's death and their father's second marriage; but she made

burthens, otherwise far from unendurable, exceedingly weighty by the spirit in which she bore them.

At the period of her introduction to the reader, she had been married a few years to one, who, in the death of the wife of his youth, the fond and devoted mother of his children, had met with a loss entirely irreparable.

In his first marriage he had experienced naught but the sunshine of domestic love. Indeed, his experience and training in early married life, had not been of a nature to fit him altogether to be as considerate of the cares and burthens of the second wife, as he should have been.

He was naturally easy, and generous to a fault—careless of little things, and prone, in the cares of a large and complicated business, to leave too much that pertained to home arrangements to the care and supervision of his wife. She who loved him first, in his and her own bright youth—she who “started in the world” with him, and had shared his steady progress on the road to worldly success—had loved him so well that it was her joy to anticipate all his wishes at home, and relieve him of every care there that lay in her power, that he might have all his energies to carry with him into the business of life. She had an ever-ready excuse for all his failings and omissions. His virtues, to her mind, were

adorned with those glowing colors with which love like hers—unchangeable and generous—delights to invest its object. And the love was mutual. He lived and toiled in his business for her and their children, she lived at home for him and his.

When all this sunlight was suddenly obscured, and the grave divided him from his beloved, he folded his hands in mute despair, and refused to be comforted. His children and business went where they chose, and that was almost to ruin. Friends tried to arouse him to the care of them, but he heeded not their remonstrances, and the tide of sorrow long flowed on unchecked by their reproofs or their sympathy.

But Time does bring its emollient—to some sooner than to others, to all soon or late—and thus it did to him.

Wise and gracious was He who framed the soul with all its living sensibilities—when He decreed that the anguish which rends it in the freshness of its infliction, shall find its keen and piercing blade blunted by the lapse of time.

Mr. Jones at length began to examine the ground upon which he stood. His children, he saw, were neglected physically and uncultivated morally. His home was one of disorder and confusion, ruled by hirelings. It was evident a wife and mother were needed there. He investigated

his half-transacted business, and saw that it sadly needed readjustment. He looked carefully into his own heart, and was convinced that God's chastisements had not wrought in him their appropriate fruits, but rather supineness, murmurings, and irretrievable neglects—a profitless, fruitless, sorrow. And he aroused himself like a man and a Christian, to retrieve, as best he could, the errors of the past.

“Get a wife,” friends said. “Find a mother for your children,” his judgment echoed. But he shrank from forming an alliance from mere motives of convenience and family comfort. His affections still acknowledged allegiance only to her memory who blessed his earlier life. “Where could he find one like her?” his heart said. “Where could he find one with the necessary qualities, that would accept the care of his neglected and disorderly home and children, with the drawback of his embarrassed finances?” his judgment queried.

But his friends thought they had discovered, what he had hitherto failed to do—one possessing all desirable qualifications. “She was thorough and practical, of excellent mind and principles, and just the one to train those children to habits of order, and to preside over and straighten out the entangled affairs of his domestic establishment.”

They, good souls, thought they would be doing her a favor by presenting a door of escape from the stigma of "old maid;" and they felt themselves in duty bound to help him get a wife, for they were sure he would never have one if they did not. Therefore they prosecuted their negotiations till the marriage was consummated.

Like too many second marriages, it was one of convenience and expediency, rather than of mutual attraction and affection. He respected her, and needed her services in his family. She excelled in household skill, and came from the most quiet and orderly of homes. Had he, for himself looked more carefully for the qualities he needed in a mother for his children, it might have been better for them both.

She was pleased with his social position and his personal qualities, and accepting the representation of his friends, she was sanguine that she could soon and easily bring order out of confusion in his house.

But that was no easy task. Long-neglected habits in the children proved stubborn things to eradicate. She was unused to children, and had no tact in winning them. She expected much from them, and knew not how to make allowances for their heedless ways, their volatile dispositions, or their naughty tempers.

It was a great change for her, from the quiet

and order of a childless house, to the bustle and disorder of one where six or seven had for years rioted and ranged uncontrolled by a mother's care or influence.

It certainly was both becoming and incumbent on the husband and father to lend his time, attention, and all helpful sympathy to lighten the load, and smooth the way for his new wife.

My readers are prepared to believe that he was found deficient in some of the duties of his position. He rejoiced in his improved domestic arrangements, and contented himself with warm expressions of his approbation, and a command to his children to obey implicitly all the requirements of their new mother. So he threw off the burthens of domestic care as he had been trained to in other years, and went to his business with a light and cheerful heart.

His were *mistakes*, not wilful errors. Had his new wife known how to enlist him in the work of self-reform in some of his habits, how happy would it have been for them both. What a field was presented her for great achievements, while she encountered her great trials and perplexities! What scope was offered her for growth in all moral dignity and excellence—growth out of self, up into all that beautifies and exalts womanhood, and allies it in character to angelic ministrants! But she was not equal to the recep-

tion or comprehension of the nobility proffered her by Providence. She settled down into the low and degraded sphere of complaint and disaffection. There are women who are equal to such positions. The very difficulties of them—the wants and defects of such a family—would develop fortitude, strength, and capacity of soul, commensurate with the emergency. There are women—and they are the world's princesses and female royalty—who would thank God for honoring them with just such a difficult and responsible trust, instead of murmuring that He did not give it to some one else, and appoint them something more agreeable and easy.

Not so our Mrs. Jones. She carried a "weary load," under which her character dwarfed, fretted, and shrivelled up, till she became what we find her at the introduction to the reader—a confirmed, indiscriminate and habitual complainer.

She constantly found fault with and about the children. They did not love her, nor she them. She was in their estimation a "step-mother," they in hers "step-children" and "torments."

Her husband came in for his full share of fault-finding. He had so many little ways that tried her, he was so queer, so careless, so lazy, and so different from her father, brother, and sister's husband! His very sociability, and his genial, amiable manners, seemed to irritate rather

than give her pleasure. It seemed cruel to her, to see him jovial and care-free, when she was fretting under so many perplexities and difficulties. But a few years served to remove such sources of annoyance, for neither neighbor nor friend could have recognized in the soured, morose and censorious man, the genial acquaintance of former times. A little more attention to wood and water, to bread and butter, gates, sidewalks, and the nameless *et ceteras*, that most certainly do affect the comfort of domestic life, he had been fretted into—but the sunshine had all left his soul.

In the evening of life, when their coffers were full, and their children had gone to take care of themselves—when home might have been lighted up with the mellowed radiance of a serene and starry evening, and the wings of care been folded in tranquil rest, this husband and wife sat down amid the gloom of gathering shadows, longing for the sun of life to set forever upon their disappointments and sorrows.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO STEP-MOTHERS.

Concluded.

WHILE duty portions out the debt we owe,
With scrupulous precision and nice justice,
Love never measures, but profusely gives—
Gives, like the thoughtless prodigal, its all,
And trembles then, lest it has done too little.

H. MORE.

THERE are many women who, with no very strong natural affinities for children, make good mothers, in the common acceptation of the word. They have an exclusiveness and narrowness of character, which leads them to value highly whatever belongs to them, and to devote themselves assiduously to the promotion of the best good of their own. Some of these most exemplary *own* mothers make the most narrow, unloving, and unloved of step-mothers. They do not love and sympathize with childhood, they only know how to take to their hearts, their own limited number of children.

There is another class of poor step-mothers, who are so for want of proper self-discipline, and

would be for the same reason deficient as own mothers. Then, there is a large class of unhappy and miserable step-mothers, who are sorely tried and tempted, from want of a just helpfulness, consideration, and co-operation from their husbands. Some men seem to think if they have found one who will consent to embark in their boat, they have done their part if they give her the oars and let her stem the current as best she may. If they find the domestic bark on the rocks or amid breakers, they are quite astonished, and don't see how it could have happened.

There is now and then a woman who makes a better step-mother than she would a natural one. There is in her composition such an overflow of self-forgetful love and "the milk of human kindness," that a wholesome decision and discrimination would hardly be secured, if, in the care of children, there was added to natural fondness for them, the tenderness of maternal affection.

Mrs. Brown belonged to this class. She was the magnet that attracted all the children in the neighborhood. "Aunt Amy" they called her before she was married, and she was Aunt Amy to every one. The real nieces and nephews, and the papas and mammas, were sorely troubled when she left them, to be mother to Mr. Brown's ten motherless ones. They did not know how to

spare her, and they were afraid she did not know what she was undertaking, to go into such a family, and take such a charge upon herself. But she was the reserved of Providence, for this very position, and most admirably was she fitted for it—both as a step-mother to those children, and a wife for just such a man as was Mr. Jeremiah Brown. Some women would not have got along with him at all. They would have lived in constant disquiet, or settled down into the supineness of base subjection. All his good qualities would have been swallowed up by a few peculiarities of education and temperament.

He belonged to a class of men not unfrequently to be met with, who practically ignore woman's equality with man—who have been educated to believe that she was created a necessary and convenient auxiliary to him, and that she best fulfils the primary ends of her being, when she unquestioningly does the bidding, and in all possible ways, promotes the wishes and comforts of the "lords of creation."

He thought Milton the most orthodox of poets, when he made Eve to say to her husband,

"God is thy law, thou mine."

His first wife was a sensitive, irritable woman, to whom all had submitted in her father's house. She found she must submit in her husband's, but

she did it with an ill grace, as much unseemly wrangling, and many fruitless contests and endless heart-burnings and complaints attested. She regarded her husband as a domestic tyrant ; and he *was* one in a small and most annoying way. But he was so because he had never been educated to understand woman, or her true relations to man. He was a tyrant because he did not know how to be a good husband. He had never from his boyhood come in contact with that wise and noble love which

“ Can melt away the dross of worldliness,
Can elevate, refine, and make the heart
Of that pure gold, which is the fitting shrine,
For fire, as sacred as e'er came from heaven.”

“Aunt Amy” was much with poor Mrs. Brown in her last sickness. It was her wont to be wherever there was sickness or trouble to be relieved. She soothed her fears, listened to her revelations of disappointment and sorrow, and closed her eyes, when the last moan of sickness and sorrow had died away with the ebbing pulse of life. And after the sods had been heaped upon the new-made grave, and the family had returned home, “she must run in to look after the children a little,” and to speak a cheering word to him who was learning his first lesson of self-investigation, from that stern admonisher—Death.

And "Aunt Amy" continued to go thus to the little group there, for they watched her coming with eager eyes. She was too unselfish to think or care for the surmises or remarks of the gossiping and officious.

And when she stopped going, and stayed—when she went to "live there for always," as the children said with excessive demonstrations of joy, she did not rush blindly upon responsibilities she had not well weighed; upon difficulties she had not well pondered.

Notwithstanding all Mr. Brown's faults, she felt she could and did really love him, and she *knew* she loved the children, and felt sure she could help both him and them to correct much that was undesirable in their habits and characters.

Woman's love and preferences shoot out in unlooked-for directions oftentimes, and take hold upon marvelously-strange objects. We could not analyze them if we would. But if love is the motive of her ceaseless activity; if affection, pure and unselfish, fills her heart and kindles her energies, we know her lot cannot be altogether unblessed, nor her life entirely barren of sweet flowers by its way-side.

"Aunt Amy" became Mrs. Brown, not from any fear of dying a "single woman," but because she *loved*, not only father and children, but the

work that awaited her wisdom, energy and love in the family.

To say that she never found trials or discouragements in her position, would be both foolish and untrue. But she was not only a large-souled woman, but a large-souled *Christian*. She knew just where to go with her burthens—she knew the way to an exhaustless fountain of sympathy—she was accustomed to oft and familiar converse with One who giveth to those who ask. She never went to any other friend with her perplexities, nor did she bring back from the closet the burthens she carried there, nor wear them before her family and friends, expressed in face, tone, and mien. When she went to her Saviour for strength and comfort, she had learned how to

“Drop her burthens at His feet
And bear a song away.”

There was no *mine* and *thine*, expressed in her domestic life. Her husband's children were her children, to all intents and purposes. She tried to be to them all they needed in a mother. Thus she enriched her own life and lightened her burthens—for how much easier it is to toil for a family thus taken into all the sympathies of the heart, and all the interests of the feelings and life, than for one to whom is doled out service because it is *duty*, or because it is expected or

must be done. Try it, ye wives, who find the care of your *husband's* children, a burthen grievous to be borne. Make them *bona-fide your own*, and see if the burthen will not be materially lightened.

Mr. Brown's peculiarities were always met by his wife, in the calm, affectionate, and firm spirit of one who understood fully and practically, what self-possession meant. She never directly arraigned him for his faults. She never contradicted him, disputed with him, or suffered herself to be irritated by him. Thus when he was disposed to indulge in his old chronic complaints, he found himself obliged to begin and end the controversy.

Her own convenience and preference, she waved in favor of his, most promptly and cheerfully; but when he entrenched with his dictation or his narrow views upon the domain of her conscience, he found, without any altercations or domestic tempests, that he had transcended the limit of his prerogatives.

So the little storms that would ever and anon gather about his heart, were scattered by the sunshine that continually brightened hers, and year by year he grew more liberal in spirit, more genial in manners, and more generous in soul. He was continually learning to wear a more enlarged and refined type of manhood, under the

noble and pure influence, of a noble, unselfish woman.

The children *knew* she loved them—she *knew* they loved her. When they went their various ways in life, her heart and sympathies went out with them—theirs were continually flowing back to her. Their home was one of peace, freedom, love, and kindly offices, such as it is woman's glory to adorn. After a few years, it became one of taste and convenience also.

Mr. Brown's second wife never teased him for objects of taste, or found fault with their antiquated, ill-constructed home, but she had a very happy way of making suggestions. So it came to pass that before she had been his wife many years, the idea somehow got possession of his practical mind, that children's welfare for life was affected by the attractiveness of their home and that even *coarse natures* were somewhat refined by contact with the beautiful and tasteful.

Much to the astonishment of all the town, the homely old house in which the Browns had dwelt from time immemorial, gave place to one of architectural beauty and symmetrical proportions. Stranger still, there were no modern inventions for facilitating or lightening a house-keeper's labors, that did not find a place in that new dwelling. When it was finished,

there were pictures upon the walls and many a little object scattered here and there more promotive of family culture than display. The value of money in stocks, banks, and real estate had materially declined in Mr. Brown's estimation—while investments for home comforts, the gratification of his family's taste, and the economizing of woman's strength, had been on the advancing scale.

Society also received some of her dues from Mr. Brown. Public charities did not knock at his door in vain, and the poor and sorrowing found out, after a few years, that he was their brother, and that he had not only a purse but a heart.

My readers must see that she, whose character is here sketched, was a worker and a laborious one, with wonderful powers of accomplishment. But her activity was more refreshing than wearing, for it was the spontaneous overflow of her heart. She worked in the sunshine of hope, and was stimulated and invigorated by the very atmosphere she created around her.

When the Master called for her, what a burst of grief went up from those who loved her! Family, friends, neighbors, the church, and the whole community mingled their lamentations by her honored grave.

She died with the smile of peace lighting up

her countenance, and with accents of cheer upon her lips. "Life has been rich, very rich," she said, "abundantly 'worth the living,' but oh! the fullness and richness of the everlasting life! I exult in the prospect of its ceaseless, holy services." Thus was her life's work consummated. Thus did she "fall asleep," to awake amid the songs of the sanctified to be welcomed to the eternal fellowship of those who, like herself, had lived for Him who gave Himself for them, a ransom.

CHAPTER V.

THE FRETFUL WIFE.

FRET, fret—scold, scold, from morning to night, in haste or leisure, when it rained or the sun shone; Mrs. More *always* found something to find fault about, something to dislike.

She began it when she was a child; her mother fretted and she learned the art. She practised her lessons well as she grew up. She carried the habit with her into the home of her married life, and scarcely kept it out of sight during the honey-moon. After she became a mother, she found occasion to fret every day and almost every hour of her life, till she came to be the most accomplished fretter that we knew.

She was handsome—at least she might have been, but fair and regular features *will* look ugly, when the scowl of peevishness mars them. She was smart, and efficient in the management of her domestic affairs. Her house was a model of order, and the ways of her household were well looked after, but I have seen more comfort, where there was less system. She was intelligent

and when the demon, that enthralled her, slumbered for a little, and her fine features were irradiated with the smile and glow of social cheerfulness, she would seem to be a most engaging woman. She was self-sacrificing. Her ease and preferences she would yield to the good of others, but the most precious offerings she laid on the altar of love, were polluted with the unholy waters of fretfulness and complaint, till the value of the benefaction was wholly lost, or greatly marred to the recipient.

She was religious, and labored to advance the kingdom of Christ on earth. Alas! there was a kingdom of quiet peace, holy calm, and heavenly sunshine, that never came to her own soul.

She was a wife and mother. She loved her family well, she thought; she toiled for them and strove to advance them in life; but she never loved them well enough to conquer her enemy for their sakes, nor did she ever make their home or their daily life, what these should be, where God has given and continues a wife and mother.

Her husband grew dwarfed in soul, soured and hard in social character. Her children—those most-to-be-pitied ones, who had the first delicate buddings of life's spring-time nipped by such biting frosts—suffered in their sensibilities, and exhibited such excrescences of character, and

such warpings of soul as might have been expected. The sweetest fragrance—the sunniest light of home, never shed its aroma, or brightness in their daily paths. Some learned from her to fret and complain, and transmitted the same curse to other households and another generation. Some with finer sensibilities, shrank and withered under it; while in some souls the waters of bitterness and misanthropy wore deep, broad channels; for there was a numerous household to feel the blight.

She felt and knew that her family did not love her as she would have had them love her. She saw that they were glad to live out of her presence, though she was conscious that she lived and labored for them. This created a sense of injustice done her, which engendered a feeling akin to bitterness as she advanced in life—and over this she fretted still more intensely; till, dear reader, she fretted herself into the grave.

The looker on, as he summed up the results of her life-work—her woman's work—might have written over all her opportunities for great and blessed achievements, "Wanting"—"Failures"—"Lost"—"Marred." And wherefore? Because of this enemy—a feeble one at first, but nourished and cherished through many years, grown at length her conqueror and master.

O woman! whose highest honor it is to mature

and rear earth's men and women for God's service, and to breathe over the homes where you rear them, something of the atmosphere of that home yours should typify—exorcise, I entreat you, this foul spirit, this demon—**FRETFULNESS**, from your domain. Let its shadow never darken your threshold. Let its breath never blight the spirits it is your province to ward and watch.

Would you be good and true, where God has placed you? Would you have yours—your own dear ones, large of soul—loving and beloved in their lives, living in sunshine and scattering sunshine? Would you be to them while you live, and live in their memories after you are dead, as one sent of God and manifesting Him in their lives? Then let your brow never be clouded or your tones sharpened, the loving beaming of your eye never quenched by this foul spirit, that gathers its venom and blight from discontent and unholy disquiet. A truly noble man, a loving innocent child, might find a better home in a den of stinging reptiles, than with “a brawling” or *fretful* “woman in a wide house.”

If you are sick, and cannot give to your home, service and care, give them the smile of a calm, unruffled soul—the sunshine of peace, love, and trust in God.

If you are burthened with care and toil, add not to the load you must needs carry, one you

need not, by fretfulness of spirit, but let cheerfulness and hope buoy up and strengthen you.

Do difficulties, dark and frowning, meet you? Does your path lie over an intricate and thorny way? Let the light of a quiet spirit brighten it, and the music of gentle, loving tones, thrill along its tangled mazes. Listen for them, and you shall catch, ever and anon, strains of poetry and measures of melody, even on *the dreariest road*.

Have you the greatest blessing a true woman's heart craves—affectionate friends, a pleasant home, a loving and noble man for a companion, and dear promising children? O let gratitude to the Great Giver, keep you always from the lowering frown of impatience, and the harsh grating tones of complaint and fretfulness, at the little ills, the small disappointments, the physical taxations and nervous discomforts and ailments, that every mother of a family, however blessed and favored, must at times encounter.

Let each strive, in her own sphere and her own home, to make that home as perfect, that sphere as ennobled as it can become. If this is the aim and ambition, surely from such a home will be banished, with much else that belittles, degrades and mars it, the demon—Fretfulness.

To her, who has become already a bond-slave, there is a victory that may be achieved—a conquest that, by God's grace, may be attained,

though it will only be through hard-fought battles, and as the reward of ceaseless vigilance.

To one who does indeed achieve such a conquest, watching angels might well send triumphant cheers—and before such, the warrior's victories are insignificant.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REPENTANT WIFE.

THREE years had passed since they joined hands at the marriage-altar for the journey of life, pledging to each other constancy and love.

The sunlight had shone upon their pathway, the cloud-shadow had also darkened it. The smile had been theirs as well as the tear. Flowers had bloomed in the path they had traveled, brambles had also sprung up by the way-side of their pilgrimage. Is it not ever thus with all who abide beneath these changing skies?

Husband and wife were direct opposites in most respects, excepting that each possessed a most resolute will. The husband was calm and dispassioned—as moveless from his deliberately-formed purposes as the granite rock. The wife was excitable, quick and impatient of opposition, unless it came in the guise of affectionate persuasion. She was, moreover, morbidly sensitive—could pour out her affections freely, or if occasion offered, could utter her griefs and complaints without reserve. He was reserved and taciturn,

seldom expressing in words, his heart-experiences. Yet deep and tender affections were his, though, as one, whose pulpit utterances are striking and original, has expressed it, "He knew not how to blossom out, but kept always in the bud."

The husband was frugal and money-careful, almost to penuriousness. The wife was generous and lavish, well nigh to thoughtlessness. *He* loved money perhaps too much for its *business* uses, and for what it could be made to command in the *future*. *She* for what it yielded and secured to the *present*.

Thus far, the clouds that had lowered in their domestic sky, had arisen from behind these hillocks of imperfection, and had been threatening, but *transitory*.

Admirably might each have balanced and molded the other, filled up gaps and smoothed down rough places in character, had they known how. He, imparting of his strength and firmness; she, diffusing the odor of gentle, winning, out-blossoming love. Each had needs that the other *might* have met and supplied.

O, love! how sacred is thy mission among the sons and daughters of earth, and by how few understood. What a boon art thou to us in our weakness—what a staff of comfort in the neediness that arises from our imperfections. Only *One* can we ever love for His *perfection*, even

He who gave Himself for us a sacrifice—the unspotted Lamb of God.

All the channels of human love must have their courses through human frailties, and over the rough places of human follies. Were our needs and imperfections less, we might, perhaps, more easily dispense with the true aids, forbearances and sympathies of conjugal life. In that world only, where “they neither marry nor are given in marriage,” there never rests the stain of sin—there is no unmet want of the soul. How elevated and sanctified is the conjugal life of that husband and wife, who live to promote not only the domestic and social *comfort* of a companion, but who seek by a self-sacrificing and discriminating adaptation of themselves, to promote the highest and truest development and culture of the affectional and moral nature of those they have wedded.

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A cold, stormy morning, ushers in the anniversary of their marriage. They are seated at the breakfast-table; one little prattler fills a high chair by her father's side.

“My dear, why do you give Emma hot cakes? they are not fit for her to eat,” says the father.

“Because she wants them, and will cry if she does not have them,” is the mother's reply.

“Her wanting them, is not a sufficient reason

for her having them ; they are very improper food for a child as feverish as she has been all night. I wish you showed a little more judgment, wife, in the diet of the child."

"I know *you* think people's wants are not of much consequence," replied the wife petulantly. "But if we eat cakes because we love them and want them, I do not see why she should not. You thought last night when she wanted water, there was no need of giving it to her, because it was an inconvenience to do so. How would you like to have your wants treated thus?"

The husband looked surprised and offended, but made no reply. He piled upon the plate of the crying child a large supply of cakes, and was very attentive to have it often replenished.

The truth was, a little excursion had been planned for that anniversary-day, to the wife's mother's, some forty miles distant, and though the storm was a sufficient reason for giving up the arrangement, she felt irritated and hurt that her husband expressed no regret at her disappointment, or made no comforting promise for another day. She had been broken of her rest through the night with her child, and was irritated by the consciousness that it was a fault of hers, this weak indulgence in its diet—the weather also, had its effect upon her nerves and spirits. She was in just that frame of body to

make much of trifles, and to sow seed for future repentance.

What an admirable opportunity was here, for the husband to leave some of love's brightest pencilings upon the canvass of his domestic life. Not by a weak yielding of his judgment to her pettishness, but by a patient, loving, forbearing consideration of her weakness, and an affectionate imparting of strength and help.

No costly gift on that anniversary-day, would have betokened a love half so deep or true or wise; but he knew not how, so he went out to his business without a word or a genial look.

In the course of the forenoon he returned to the house on some errand. His wife a little ashamed of her morning peevishness, asked him quite pleasantly if he thought of going that day.

"Why, how absurd!" he exclaimed; "would you go out in such a storm as this?"

"It don't storm now."

"But it did a half hour since, and will again before another half hour is over."

"Well, we can go in the stage, and then shall not feel the storm."

"Wife, what is the use of incurring the expense of the stage, when we have a horse and buggy idle in the barn? Don't act like a child, when Providence prevents our going."

"I suppose it's of no use spending money to

gratify one's family," was the angry reply of the wife. "Money was made for other uses, and I ought to have found it out by this time," she added very sarcastically. Then followed words bitter and recriminating, words that should never have been spoken, and that were afterwards remembered with bitter anguish. The wife sat down to her dinner *alone* that day, for her husband came not again to his home till the evening lamps had long been lighted.

The little one had been feverish and vomiting all day, from an overloaded stomach—no unusual occurrence; the rain had pattered against the windows, the wind had whistled angrily around the domestic cot, and lonely and gloomy, that day had been a long, long one in her calendar.

When she heard her husband's footsteps in the evening, love and conscience whispered, "Go, meet him; and confess the wrongs and weakness of the morning." But pride said, "No; he was as much in the wrong as you were. If he loves you, let him show that he cares for your disappointment and that he dislikes to see you grieved and unhappy." So, the voice of pride was louder than the voice of love, and the repentant words were suppressed.

Several wretched days succeeded. Each needed but a word, or a loving look, to break the ice of pride and coldness, but each waited for

the other to first speak that word or give that look.

The husband had prepared a much-desired gift as a present to her, and made his arrangements to accompany her on the little journey as soon as the weather was propitious. He was really sorry that he had not been more considerate and forbearing towards his wife. But this was all locked within his own breast. She said to herself, "I am always the first to yield and seek a reconciliation; now I will stand it as long as he does." So no yielding word was uttered by either; no regretful or affectionate look beamed forth its magic warmth.

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The storm has given place to a clear sky and a bracing atmosphere. Domestic disturbances have assumed a fixed and forbidding aspect. The wife is excited and wretched. She wants a reconciliation, but she does not want to humble herself, and be the first to seek it. The husband is also wretched, but he preserves a stern, unmoved exterior.

Four days have passed since this dark cloud first appeared in their horizon. They are again seated at the breakfast-table, but no sunbeams of love or social cheerfulness dance and sport about it. Even the little one seems to feel the influence of her parents' unhappiness, and is sad and

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silent. At length with a desperate effort to force her husband to say something, the wife breaks silence: "Do you intend to keep your *engagement* with my mother, and go there this week with your family," she inquired in cold and dignified tones.

"My business will not allow me to leave home this week," was the frigid and laconic reply.

"Then *I* shall go without you, for I consider a promise to my mother, of more consequence than some small gain in business," she replied, in irritated and unwifely tones of voice.

"Very well," said her husband. "Will you go in the stage, or shall I send the horse and buggy with you."

"I will go in the stage; but I will not tax you to meet the expense, as I have some money of my own."

The blood mounted to his cheek and brow, but he only said, "Very well, I will send the stage round."

He immediately went to his place of business, neither speaking a farewell word. As his tall, manly form disappeared with the closing door, his wife buried her face and wept aloud. What would she not have given to have recalled her cutting words and her hasty decision. She felt deeply and bitterly that no personal gratification could compensate for coldness and frowns from

the father of her child, the husband she had covenanted to love and honor.

Had it not been for *pride*, she would even then have relented and recalled both him and her hasty decision to go without him. But this enemy whispered, "Go! *he* don't care—why should you?" Hope said, "He will come for you in a day or two, and then all will be easily reconciled—it may do him good to have you gone."

She hastily put a few articles into her traveling bag, and before noon took her seat in the stage with her little one by her side. As it rolled by her husband's place of business, she looked out, with a last, lingering hope that he would at least give her a farewell look from the door of his store, but she saw him not. Could she have seen him, perchance she might have perceived the hand that held the accountant's pen trembling with ill-suppressed emotion.

The way seemed long and cheerless, and many a scalding tear coursed down her cheeks ere her mother's door was reached. A week passed, and each day the wife strained her weary eyes, to catch sight of him she expected and longed to see. Pride, self-will and anger had departed. She only longed for an opportunity to seek her husband's forgiveness, and have him know of her self-reproaches and repentance. Her arrange-

ments were made to return next morning, as she came, alone. In her true sorrow for her faults she felt that she only was to be blamed.

A horse, wet with hurried traveling, halts at her mother's door. She recognizes it as their own, and rushes out to meet her husband. It is only a neighbor, and her heart misgives her.

Well it may; for he comes with tidings sad and crushing. Alas! that wife shall never more hear from her husband words of reconciliation and love. Death has placed its seal of silence upon his lips, the pulse that throbbed uneasily at her sorrows, and the voice that spoke no sympathy, are stilled forever.

A heavy timber from a building has fallen upon him, and he has been borne to his deserted home, a crushed and mangled corpse.

Our pen may not describe the anguish and the repentance of that smitten wife; it was a life-sorrow—a life-repentance.

On the table in their room—that lonely chamber, where he had day after day held companionship only with his own regretful thoughts, she found a letter directed to herself. It was ready for transfer to the post-office, and had evidently been penned just before he went out to meet his tragic end. It was full of manly tenderness, of sorrow for his own part in their domestic estrangement, and informed her of his intention to

join her in a day or two, as soon as some little business matter should be completed.

Would you see the wilful, the proud and obstinate, gentle and subdued? Go seek that stricken, widowed one in her desolate home. She has laid down her selfish passions at the feet of Him who smote her so sorely, yet so kindly. She is a nobler, truer, holier woman, but the brightness of life has departed. A sombre cloud hangs ever over her pathway, which shall be lifted up and dispersed never, "till the day dawns and the shadows flee away."

As the hoarse winds moan, and the snows of a New England winter drift over the grave of the husband of her youth, her true and dearest friend, she draws her little daughter closer to her side before their solitary hearth-stone, and teaches her the highest and noblest lessons of womanhood and of life. Then, clasping her little hand in her own, she kneels by that broken domestic altar and supplicates "Our Father," for His blessing upon those instructions, and that the daughter may never know, through her own sin and folly, the bitterness of the cup her mother drains.

As they go to their nightly rest with no protector save Israel's Shepherd and Watchman, the child revels in the free, joyous dreams of happy childhood, but the mother dwells upon

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the tender, subdued, sad and regretful memories,
that must ever abide with her.

“The shade of the absent shapes her dreams,
A sob for the loved one, her bosom fills, —
The dear face and form, and half-spoken love,
That slumbered once in the heart's recess,
All wake to light, and move in her soul
The buried deep of its tenderness.”

CHAPTER VII.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

"Oh dear! what *did* I ever marry for?" sighed a weary wife and mother. "It's nothing but care, trouble, disappointment and vexation, sick and crying children, miserable, shiftless domestics, overtaxed energies, feeble health, and more than all, *a cross, selfish, exacting husband*. Oh! I wish I was dead and at rest in the grave."

The wife lowered her complaining tones a little as she said this, for she knew it was wrong to cherish such *thoughts*, and when they took form and expression, they startled her with their harshness and sinfulness. But the clouds were dark overspreading all her sky that day, and the winds that blew over the plain of her life were chill and dreary, sweeping rudely and harshly over the chords of her soul. It was often so. Harmonies were the exceptions in her mournful chant of life—discords the rule.

Hers was a vexed and sore-tried, a disappointed and overburdened life. It had for her no rest, no recreation nor sustaining sympathy, none

of the sunshine of congenial love and confidence, and her soul had not yet learned to arise from the low grounds of its disquietudes and sorrows, and to enter into its "*rest*."

An unusual share of physical burdens pressed upon this wife. Oft-repeated and protracted illness among her children, straightened temporal resources, a jaded, depressed condition of her own physical and nervous energies, that made even small things burdensome, seemed to press upon her sensitive spirit with crushing power.

And in her husband, she had no solace nor strength. He knew very little about the needs, and concerned himself less for the comforts and pleasures of his household. He was far more zealous in doing something for the Hindoo or Chinaman, than he was in guarding and cherishing, in culturing and ministering to the joys, virtues and home-comforts of those whom God had given him to love and cherish, to guide and guard in all the ways of life.

He was a *representative* man of a class not difficult to find, who look upon domestic life as a theater for the exercise of man's petty tyrannies, as an institution whose highest and almost only use, is to promote the convenience, comfort, honor, and aggrandizement of *themselves* — the "lords of creation."

Some writer has observed that there *are* stairs

to the inner chamber of every soul, though often obscured or out of sight.

This man, this husband, *had a soul*, though it was a small one and much concealed and overlaid by the lumber and rubbish of material life. The doorway to it was hidden from superficial view by a heavy drapery of selfishness, and festooned by many a cobweb of moroseness and exaction. The "stairs," leading thither, were very winding and of difficult ascent, and few troubled themselves to climb them.

Yet this complaining wife had once found the way to that heart as none had ever done before. She had entered its inner chamber, and with woman's tact had wiped the dust from its windows, so that rays of sunshine had straggled in, warmed and gladdened it. It was a *poor* human soul—poor in the saddest sense of the word; for it was so narrow in its aims, so poverty-stricken in its sympathies, and so contracted in its growth towards its Maker and its fellow-man. It was a soul that *needed* a friend, such a one as that wife seemed to give promise of becoming in their early married life. But cares, disappointments and sickness, came to weary and discourage her. She felt the need of some human stay—her heart yearned for congenial sympathy, and without it grew weak, soured and fretted. Bitter thoughts had taken the place of loving efforts, recrimina-

tions had succeeded concessions, till we find her in a vast Sahara of the soul—a lonely traveler, though surrounded by living forms—wandering amid arid wastes and parching sands, pressing on wearily because there was no alternative, uncheered by love, harmony or hope.

Life had become a burden to her. Its yoke galled and was grievous to be borne: yet, reader, it was more because of the way she wore that yoke, than of the yoke itself.

She was a professed child of God, but she lived in poverty and exile, far from her Father's house; therefore when human sympathy and help failed her, she tottered and staggered with sad complainings on her weary way, cheerless, hopeless and forlorn. * * * * *

"Life is rich and as full of blessing as it is of labor. Each hour is crowded with golden opportunities for laying up treasures of endless worth. The longest life is all too short in which to do its work, and win a crown and the *rest* beyond. Spurn not its precious offerings for discipline and soul-culture, but see in each an angel in disguise," said a calm-faced matron to a younger friend, who, in the morning-time of her domestic life, overborne by the difficulties that beset her, was ready to faint and die.

"Life," she continued, "pressed full of cares and labors, encompassed with perplexities and

trials of the fortitude and patience, if we *use it aright*, is a richer, nobler life, than one that ever swings on oiled and golden hinges, unmarked by soul-conflicts, and never exulting in victories achieved. I, too, once wished to die. My trials and burdens seemed greater than I could bear; I strove continually to see how I could *rid* myself of them, rather than how best to *meet* and *bear* them. When I found I could not divest my life of its trials, I—weak coward that I was!—wanted to die, or thought and said I did. God heard my impious request, He saw my ignoble cowardice, my repining spirit, but in great mercy He stayed His judgments and did not cut me off from the privileges and opportunities of probation. He drew near to me by those teachings, revealings and gracious influences, that opened my eyes to see life, its relations and discipline, in a new light, and melted my soul in thanksgiving to Him for its stern teachings, its harrowing disappointments. I would not now that life had been to me more smooth and bright—more as my fancy would have planned it. I would have it just as it is, ‘for so it seemeth good in His sight.’ I am not desolate in spirit, nor do clouds often darken my sky, but my soul abides in the peace and sunshine of my Father’s smiles. Beyond this uneven way is the fair Land of Promise, the inheritance, the rest, but I

would not shorten my Leader's way thither, nor overleap the rough places he appoints me to tread with patient step, nor shun the work or the difficulties he marks out for me. I thank God daily for life, and the work of life He crowds upon my heart and hands."

And this, dear reader, was the complaining woman who wanted to die, who lived under cloud-shadows and in darkness and dearth of spirit once. And her companion—that unhappy, selfish spirit—how fared it with him? Sunshine and genial showers will soften the hardest soil. Love and gentleness never failing, will call forth some responsive love and sympathy even from the most soulless. The barriers were in time removed from before the door of that isolated soul—light and love did stream in and were reflected back, though not in unstinted measure. The wife remembered her vow "for better or for worse," and girded herself with love and patience, to be such a wife as he needed.

True, he *needed* what more *generous* natures did not; and he found in her his needs well and faithfully met, and his poor soul grew richer, his dwarfed and stinted sympathies budded and blossomed, though not luxuriantly, and the home of clouds, storms, discords and complaints, became calm, bright and peaceful, in the blessings of *sanctified* discipline.

When the labors of life's day were ended, and the evening shadows stretched afar over *the valley* through which she must pass, on her way to the everlasting home, light from the hills beyond streamed athwart their darkness and fringed and gilded them with celestial radiance. And in that solemn, yet joyful hour, she lifted her voice in thanksgiving to God that He had lengthened out her day so long, making it rich with cares and work for him, and with the other blessings and discipline of her probation, he had not exempted her from the joys and sorrows—the toils and rewards of domestic life.

Thus to whomsoever God appoints a difficult work, will He give all needed grace and strength, if sought; and to whom he commits the keeping and development of a hard, unloving human soul, to such will he mete out sympathy and rewards (if they cheerfully and faithfully fulfill their trust,) such as he rarely bestows upon those to whom he appoints a more genial soil for culture.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SICKNESS —A CONTRAST.

“DID we but use it as we ought,
This world would school each wandering thought
 To its high state.
Faith wings the soul beyond the sky,
Up to that better world on high,
 For which we wait.

“The pleasures and delights, which mask
In treacherous smiles life's serious task,
 What are they all
But the fleet coursers of the chase,
And death an ambush in the race
 Wherein we fall?”

LONGFELLOW's Translation from the Spanish.

LET me introduce my reader to a sick-room and to one of the many lessons sickness may teach. This sick-room is not the chamber of opulence, where every appliance of wealth and art mitigate the sufferings and discomforts of disease. It is a neat but homely apartment in a log-house in a small “western clearing.”

A bed stands in one corner of the room—the corner most remote from the fire-place. A partition of chintz separates the end of the room used for a bed-room from the kitchen apartment. A few necessary articles of furniture, neat and well

preserved, indispensable to household comforts, but nothing superfluous, appear to our inspection. The day is excessively warm, and the chintz curtain is thrown up and the doors and windows are wide open, that the little air stirring without may visit the invalid propped up on her bed. She is a woman in middle life, with a sweet benignant face—the mother of the family who call this little habitation in the wilderness *home*. Her labored breathing and the deep lines of distress upon her countenance betoken one who has suffered much and long from some painful malady. Approach the place where she lies—you perceive she is one whose countenance and mien, despite the ravages of disease, denote a superiority, not in keeping with the rough surroundings of her exterior life. There is no impatience or peevishness expressed in her face or words, though there are suppressed moans with almost every inspiration; and a wasted frame and haggard looks tell of no ordinary sufferings. As you approach her you perceive a strange, unpleasant odor, illy disguised with the partial disinfectants at command. If you have ever before encountered it, that most to be dreaded of all diseases—*cancer*—is suggested to your mind. Yes, she is dying, slowly, agonizingly, inch by inch, as the dreaded, the fearful malady creeps on towards her vitals, gnawing, torturing, irresistible.

She is the beloved mother of two daughters and four sons, and to human short-sightedness it would seem as if that wife and mother was indispensable to the family, whose home was thus isolated in the wilderness—whose guide and light and joy would be removed with her. But God saw not thus, and though her family found it hard to submit, and though she had doubtless experienced conflicts of spirit, ere she could look calmly at the agonies of such a death, and at the dear ties which must be sundered by it, no traces of it were now visible in her suffering but placid demeanor. She lies there feebly waving a bush to and fro with her emaciated hand, to defend herself from the attacks of flies and musquitoes, and occasionally a daughter of fifteen leaves some household avocation at the farther end of the room to minister to her, or looks anxiously out of the door and up the road, as if expecting some one. She appears tired, anxious, and prematurely care-worn.

In one of her visits to the sick-bed, her mother replied to her inquiry if she wanted anything, "Nothing now, dear child, only to see you sit down and rest a little. It grieves me to feel that I make you one additional step, but I take it as a part of my discipline that I must tax my family instead of serving them. It is a part of your early discipline, my child, thus to bear care and

labor beyond your years. But as God appoints it, He will bless you in it."

"O, dear mother, I do not mind anything, only that we cannot do more for you, I know you are a great deal worse, and I do long to sit by you and wait on you, and fan you all the time, and not be doing this housework so much. Oh dear, if we were only where we used to live, then we could do more for you, and a doctor could come in often to see you and perhaps do something to relieve you when you are so distressed. If we could only get some one to do the work, so that I could take care of you and be by you more, I should be glad. Mother, since you have been sick, I think sometimes I almost *hate* housework and *woods*," and great tears gathered into the eyes and coursed down the cheeks of the wearied, anxious girl.

Her mother spoke soothing, comforting words, such as she knew how to speak, and Martha laid down the fan with which she had been standing over her, and returned to her preparations for her father's and brother's supper with a lighter heart than she had carried for some hours. She had lightened her load at that best of all earthly places—a mother's love and sympathy, and the housework was easier for it, her weight of care lighter.

Poor child, the time is coming when thou wilt

have no addition to thy cares in a sick and wasting mother, but thy burthen will be heavier, for from that bed will come no words of sympathy, no counsels of love.

A young girl of twelve enters the house. She looks warm and flushed, as if she had been walking fast and far. Her sister inquires if Sally Baker could come.

"No," is her reply; "Mrs. Baker says she is very sorry, but she has a house full of harvesters and the baby is sick, and she cannot possibly spare her."

"Did you go any further," asked her mother, with an anxious, sympathetic look at Martha, whose face indicated severe disappointment.

"Yes, mother, I have been every where I could think of, but everybody is harvesting, and folks are sick, and they can't spare their girls. But they all seemed to be very sorry, and said they would come and watch, when we wanted them, and after harvest we can get some one, I know," and her face looked bright as if there was light ahead, if it was dark now.

Martha continued her preparations for supper, and Emily sat down to fan and attend upon her mother. The father and sons came in from the harvest-field, and the suffering one looked up from her bed of distress with a smile and a kind inquiry after their success, and while they par-

took their frugal meal her moans of pain were suppressed and the light of thoughtful love for others overspread her features. Twilight-shadows gathered over the landscape, and enwrapped the little forest-home. Its inmates bowed before the domestic altar, rendered thanks for mercies received, and besought the protecting presence of Israel's Shepherd.

"Set my drink where I can reach it, and I shall not need to disturb any of you, unless I have a severe paroxysm of pain," said the invalid. But they urged very much that they might be permitted to alternate with each other in watching with her. She was so much worse and they knew she needed a watcher, and they were able to watch, they said, but she refused.

"You all need your rest." Father and brothers must work hard in the harvest-field or else the labor of the summer will be thrown away and the family lack bread. The girls must have rest, or they could not sustain the labors and cares that devolve upon them. It was better for her to do without some little attentions that might be desirable than to have them all break down in the care of her. Let them do what they would, the hours must chase each other, freighted with a burthen of suffering which no human love could materially lighten. "When I leave you motherless," she said, "I would not

leave you also such a legacy of remembered toil, exhausted energies and destroyed health, as shall well nigh obscure cheerful remembrances of your mother. Let me have the satisfaction of sparing you all I can, while I can. Too well I know where my fearful disease will soon place me, and how much then you must all be taxed in the necessary care of me. Leave these weary night-watchings till there is a *must be* for them." Her children acquiesced, for they were in the habit of considering their mother's judgment in all matters almost infallible. They well knew also that her self-discipline, while it made her ever considerate of the best good of others, enabled her to be most comfortable and happy herself when she felt that the greatest good of the greatest number was most promoted by a given course.

And thus the days and weeks wore away. The wearied husband came in from the toils of the field, and it was restful to sit down by the wasting wife, and on her placid but suffering face, read gentle patience, and traces of her blessed communings with Him whom she was soon to behold face to face. On the wings of her faith, he often seemed elevated above the world of sin and sorrow, into those purer regions where the holy dwell. As she poured forth from time to time her comforting thoughts, or her words of

valued counsel, or dwelt upon the goodness and mercy of God towards them all, or told them what the discipline of life and especially of her long sickness had done for her soul, an influence fell upon their anxious hearts which they felt and acknowledged long after all that was mortal of that wife and mother had moldered back to dust. By that bed-side of sickness, that family learned the highest and holiest lessons in their school of life.

The neighbors came in from their distant and scattered homes, with such offers of service as was theirs to bestow, and when disease had made such progress that watchers were no longer to be dispensed with, those who ministered to her through the long weary nights of distress, felt that they had been on privileged and holy ground.

Even the little children of the settlement loved to go and see the sick and dying woman, who told them such beautiful things about God and heaven. She had been a nurse in sickness to the whole settlement, and their comforter in afflictions, and they were all more than willing to do the little in their power to promote her comfort and smooth her passage to the grave. She in turn tried to minister to them in spiritual things, and point them to the life beyond this fleeting day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SICKNESS—A CONTRAST.

Continued.

"THE many make the household,
But only one, *the home*."

THE matron to whose sick-bed I have introduced my readers, had not spent her early years amid such rude and primitive surroundings. A spacious and comfortable mansion, with wide and fertile fields attached, in one of the loveliest and most cultivated farming sections of the Empire State, had been the home of her childhood and youth. A mother, who had been as wise as she was kind and good, had trained her to all womanly virtues and graces, as well as to Christian fortitude and self-denial. She had enjoyed good advantages for education, and what she had acquired at schools she had augmented and made serviceable by imparting as an instructress in a large family of younger brothers and sisters.

Her mother had early taught her that the promotion of self-interest was not the end and aim of a true life. She had taught all her children to restrain their impulses, and act from the

dictates of principle. While bestowing judicious care in the various ills of infancy and childhood, she had most carefully inculcated the virtues of self-restraint, patience and consideration for others, under the irritability of sickness. She had trained them, very lovingly and kindly withal, to suppress their little unpleasant feelings and ailments as much as possible—to avoid “making a fuss” about trifles, and in serious illness, to be hopeful and cheerful.

Sickness necessarily brings additional trouble to a family. At the best it is a burthen and trial to those who bear the anxieties and toils of ministering to it, and the least we can do to lighten the load of those who care for us in our needs and helplessness, is to be grateful, and considerate in our demands, exhibiting a winning and gentle demeanor, and exercising, even in the sufferings and prostration of sickness, a spirit of self-denial in controlling the feelings and suppressing our desires for what will more tax and incommode others to grant, than it will benefit us to receive. Many families are suffered to grow up with such habits in sickness that they are almost nuisances at such times. They seem to feel that a little indisposition is a license for ill-temper and all unreasonableness; and that severe sickness absolves them from all obligation to consider any one or any thing but self.

She whom we find on this sick-bed bore practical and fruitful testimony to the power and value of early maternal influence. Disease in its most repulsive form, inconveniences, discomforts and discouragements were all of them powerless to efface her serenity of countenance and demeanor, or to make her *forget the comfort and happiness of others.*

A train of circumstances, which we will not detail, had forced her husband, with his family, from the home of their early married life. A pleasant home it was, near to father and mother, brothers and sisters. Three years previous to this introduction, this family had taken possession of their present home. The forest around them was unbroken for many miles, save as here and there the axe of "the settler" had made an opening around some similar home. They were miles from physicians, from stores, from mills and from most of the ordinary conveniences of life. They were shut out from church and educational privileges, and in short subjected to what those who make trial of *pioneer life* have to experience, before they make the wilderness around them "to bud and blossom," and teem with the comforts of cultivation. But hope and courage were strong within them. The forest was slowly but surely receding before their labors, and fruitful fields of grain waved in rich abundance,

where the lordly trees of the woods stood in their strength and pride but three short years before.

Already they saw in the future a rich and cultivated country around them, with farm-houses, school-houses, churches, and all the comforts of a land teeming with the riches of the soil and the results of labor in its tillage. Their own inheritance spread out before their hopes in broad and well-cultivated fields, in waving orchards and flowery lawns, spacious barns, and a commodious house, fashioned and regulated like the one they had left behind in that far-off land—"the East." Judge then how hard it was to resign *the light* of that isolated and humble home, to the ravages of such a disease—she who was the help-meet—the stay—the comforter in every dark and discouraging day—the one who not only guided her domestic affairs with energy and wisdom, but who supplied her children's educational wants to a great degree—how could they give her up? And how could that infant settlement spare her? She was a most efficient home missionary among them. To her they owed their Sabbath School. On her depended the little maternal meetings. To her they looked for advice and sympathy in trouble. But the mandate had gone forth, and they all knew that she must die—that they *must* give her up.

Her own soul had experienced its conflicts and its dark days, before she could look calmly upon leaving those who so much needed her, and *when* they so much needed her, and say, "Thy will be done."

But that had long been passed, and now she was daily striving to prepare her family, as far as she could, to live without her, and to influence her neighbors as they came in to see her, to prepare for sickness and the exchange of worlds.

There were no unreasonable demands, no inconsiderate taxations of others' strength, no querulous tones or useless repinings, no hurried and agitated preparations for a dreadful event, but a grateful reception of all needed attentions, a calm awaiting the onward progress of disease, and a heroic fortitude and patience in drinking the cup of suffering in His strength, who had appointed it. Her portion was in another country, "even a heavenly" one. "Sweet fields beyond the swelling floods," were the fields of her inheritance, but she forgot not the temporal or eternal welfare of those she was leaving behind. A halo was round that sick bed. Bright rays of life and holy love made that rude log-dwelling often luminous with a solemn joy and glory. To the last, despite the wasting, withering power of mortal anguish to weaken and disturb the spirit, peace hovered

like a dove over the pillow of that suffering one, and from her, the chastened household learned lessons for life, and lessons for the bed of death, which they will never forget.

The tabernacle seemed frail, but disease was long in taking down its frame-work. Oh! what weeks and months of agony were endured before she slept in Jesus—before the weary was at rest! But at length the long night of suffering ended—the day dawned, the shadows fled away. Earth had doffed its summer garniture, and was clad in a wintry mantle, when she cast off “the-worn out fetter” of the body, and it was robed in its shroud and confined in its narrow earth-home. Her work was done, and the discipline of sickness and of life was ended.

Henceforth, in all that household shall holy thoughts center round that sick-bed, and hallowed memories mingle with their sorrows, as they recall its scenes of suffering—and the name of wife—mother—shall be sacred to them as is their remembrance of the departed.

“She hath gone from her home, but nurtured vines
In clustering fruits abound;
She hath tied for the tendrils their guiding lines;
And the scions are pruned around.”

CHAPTER X.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SICKNESS—A CONTRAST.

Continued.

SICKNESS and death are no respecters of persons or circumstances. Neither is there any royal road to that other country, whither the rich and poor, the neglected and favored, travel. All must meet the humiliation, weakness and suffering of dissolving nature; all must go down into the valley of shadows and darkness. None can borrow any light for the darksome way from the good things earth affords. Unless He, who has tasted death for all, go with the traveler there, king and peasant, are alike helpless and alike must tread the gloomy way alone. And the discipline of sickness, what is it? It should ever be the still small voice of the Father of our spirits, bidding us purify ourselves from the defilements of life—set our houses in order, and gird ourselves about with those robes the spirit needs to wear, when it casts aside the vestments of mortality.

* * * * *

An invalid was reclining in a luxurious arm-

chair, in a spacious and quiet chamber, whose windows commanded a fair and glorious scene. Sunset hues were touching the landscape with a strange beauty. Azure and purple clouds hung like a gorgeous canopy above, while rock, hill and wooded dell glowed with the rich and varied hues which art can only imitate. A little in the distance, the blue waters of the Atlantic, lay spread out in their glorious sheen, and the murmur of the beating surf fell with a soothing monotone upon the listening ear. There was an air of refinement, almost of luxury, about the spacious mansion, and old majestic elms, swayed their branches in the inviting lawn before it.

The breeze that stirred the drapery at the windows of the sick-room was laden with the scent of flower and shrub. Prolific and graceful vines crept climbing up the walls, and festooned and shaded the casement. Without, were beauty, culture and nature's summer evening glories. Within, were quiet, and comforts, and all the conveniences of life. But there was sickness there also. Not severe and agonizing, as that we looked upon in the lonely cabin of the pioneer, but the slow and almost imperceptible wasting that incipient consumption bears in its train.

The invalid's eye wandered for a while over the view without, with a kind of quiet, languid, pleasure. It had been a sultry summer's day,

but now a freshening sea-breeze stole in, playing with the vine and curtains that draped the windows, and dallying with the tresses that clustered over a brow, very pale, but finely formed and beautiful. Presently she withdrew her eyes from the scene, and drawing a light shawl closely around her shoulders and over her chest, with a shudder and an impatient tone, she said, "How cold it is!"

A slight, delicately-formed girl, of perhaps fifteen summers, sat on a low stool in the room, deeply absorbed in reading. She seemed not to hear the remark of the invalid, nor to heed anything beyond the occupation that absorbed her. A few moments passed, when with a gesture of impatience, and an angry flash of the eye, the invalid went to the open window and attempted to close it, but immediately commenced coughing violently. The young girl sprang from her stool, and in tones of undisguised distress, exclaimed, "O aunty, why did you not let me do it for you?"

"I had rather wait on myself as long as I can, than trouble those who seem so reluctant to attend to me. Your book seems to have much more interest for you than your sick aunt."

The girl's face crimsoned and her lips quivered, but she forced back the tears that filled her eyes, and simply remarking in a subdued tone,

"I did not know you wished the window closed," she laid by her book and proceeded to perform some little services which she thought might be acceptable to her aunt.

"Don't, child, make such a rattling with those papers. Do take that vase of flowers out of the room—the scent makes me sick. Oh dear, I am *so* tired—why *don't* Mrs. More come? How inconsiderate she is. She knows I need her at this time of day. I won't let her go again—that's always the way if you give these people 'an inch they will take an ell.' No one seems to have the least consideration for *me*"—and the face that *might* have looked so beautiful and lovely, was absolutely repulsive in its expression of peevishness and ill-humor.

The young companion of the invalid strove in vain to calm and soothe her. She reminded her that Mrs. More, the nurse, had been gone but a little while, hardly long enough to look in upon her sick son and return, that this son was *very* sick and could not live long, and that it was such a comfort to him to see his mother once in a while, and entreated to be allowed to do for her aunt, what the nurse would do if she were there. But she petulantly replied, "You know you can't, and that's just as much consideration as any one has for me. Every one must be thought of and cared for but *me*. No one seems

to know that I am wearing out as fast as I can. Well, I shall not be here to trouble any one much longer," and the great tears fell with convulsive sobs, till another fit of coughing and the entrance of her husband gave a new feature to the scene.

He was a tall, noble-looking man. Intellect was inscribed on his brow, and the graces that adorn domestic life found expression in his countenance. His face was flushed with rapid walking and he entered the room in haste. "Carrie dear, is it too late for you to ride? It is a glorious time, if it is not too chilly for you. I have tried hard for the last two hours to get away from the office, but could not without *injustice* to those whose business was in my hands. I was so sorry, for I wanted you to ride. Are you disappointed? Dare you go now?"

"Of course I can't go now. I should think you would know it was too late and chilly. That's always the way, if I want to go I can't. It is not often I feel like riding now, and I should think business could once in a while wait a little. You will have all your life to attend to that, but you will have *me* but a little while longer;" and fresh tears and sobs came fast.

The husband put his arm tenderly around her, and tried to soothe her. "I have had a long

talk with the doctor to-day," he said, "and he has taken a great load off my heart. He feels confident that your disease is not organic, and that you may get well, if you take the right course and keep up good spirits. He says your cough is sympathetic, and your unfavorable symptoms, the result of debility—but he says you may get well, if you *will*. I have felt so light-hearted, I could hardly wait to see my office closed that I might come home and cheer you up with this news."

But his cheerful tones and words seemed to produce anything but a pleasant effect. She replied very petulantly, "Yes, I suppose you all think I am not much sick. None of you know how much I suffer, and sometimes I think no one *cares*. You will see pretty soon, whether I have consumption or not. I should not wonder if you had some reflections, not very pleasant, one of these days."

The husband looked perplexed and disturbed, still he saw that she was tried and disappointed about her ride, and he was very patient with her, and tried hard to soothe her. His excessive love for his beautiful wife led him to attribute all that was unreasonable or unamiable, to the effects of disease. And he was becoming quite accustomed to these varying and unreasonable moods of hers, for as the days of sickness and

feebleness were prolonged the strength of the spirit also waned.

This was her first taste of life's serious ills. Its sunshine had lain warm and bright in her pathway, and had reflected itself in face and mien. But now the clouds had arisen in her horizon, and all the sunshine of the heart had vanished at their first dim shadowy outlines.

She had been reared in the atmosphere of a false and misjudging tenderness. She had never been educated for life as it is, with its vicissitudes and stern realities. She had never learned to bear trouble. In her childhood, a little indisposition was a sufficient excuse for all sorts of unreasonable exactions, and unamiable tempers. "O Carrie is not very well to-day," was from her cradle up, the palliation for all the petulance, selfishness and self-will she chose to manifest.

She was beautiful in person, and gifted in mind, and when she became a wife of the elegant and talented man, who was so proud of her, she seemed, to the superficial eye, to be one fitted to shine in the domain of home, with all the graces and glory of true and noble womanhood. And this might have been, had she but known in her own experience, the discipline of self-control—the blessedness of a subdued self-will. She professed the religion of the "meek and lowly"

One, but it had not vitality enough in her soul, to overcome evil, and to spread the placid calm of gentle trustfulness, over the irritability and temptations attendant upon enfeebled health.

An idolized, petted bride, she hardly encountered much to test her spirit the first year of her married life. But when the gift of her first-born brought with it prostrated nervous energy and protracted debility, the sun was suddenly withdrawn from the domestic sky, and clouds, mists, and sometimes tempests, gathered there.

Imprudences, the result of self-will, had resulted in a debility combined with premonitory indications of consumption.

She imagined herself sicker than she was, and at the same time obstinately refused to pursue the course her friends thought most promotive of her recovery. She demanded the most unremitting and wearying attentions from her friends, and felt herself grieved and injured if they did not manifest the alarm and anxiety those would be expected to feel who were watching the last ebbs of life.

Her friends and medical advisers felt that she might recover if she *would*, but, though she was loath to die, she would not take the tonic—hope, nor the sedatives—gentle patience and submission, nor the great supporter—trust; and she was

sure she should die and she almost appeared resolved to do so.

She was very uncomfortable in mind and body, and seemed determined that all around should share her discomfort. So she gave the household little rest day or night, and though every comfort, every alleviation of sickness, was at her command, she returned more tones of complaint than smiles of gratitude.

She said she "could not help it" nor control her nerves. Her husband looked upon her rare beauty, and bethought him of other days, and felt that her unreasonable tempers must be the effect of feebleness and suffering; and he nerved himself to bear it as a part of *his* share of her burthens and sorrows. Always well himself, he knew very little, even by observation, of the moods or effects of disease.

He had never been privileged to stand by those sick-beds, where an unseen strength girds the sufferer about, and where a holy light illumines the otherwise-darkened chamber, and spreads over decay and dissolution a strange and holy beauty.

CHAPTER XL

THE DISCIPLINE OF SICKNESS—A CONTRAST.

Concluded.

It was midnight before the invalid and those who composed her household were at rest and asleep. The return of the nurse had given occasion for another outburst of petulance and restiveness. The little one, who had been removed to an adjoining room, and consigned to other than maternal care, was sending up plaintive cries, which came to the mother's ears ever and anon through the intervening partitions. "I cannot stand that noise—that crying. Why don't you do something to stop it. I don't believe the nurse takes good care of that baby, or it would not cry so much;" and the ever-attentive husband divided his time between the wife and the room where the baby was, till at length he had the latter removed to a remote part of the house.

"Young ladies in their father's house don't know much what *trouble* is," said the spoiled woman, with an injured tone, when she was at

length quiet, under the administration of an anodyne, and the weary husband sought his rest. He might have been pardoned perhaps had he mentally exclaimed, "It takes married life and a sick wife to show *men* what trouble is."

Thus months wore away. The history of the evening we have noted, was of frequent repetition, varied to suit occasions. The invalid did not improve in health, nor did she waste rapidly, though it was evident that health would never revisit her frame, and that at no very distant day the powers of life would yield to the power of disease. Everything that kindness, affection and money could do for her comfort was done, yet even *love* was forced to admit that life thus prolonged brought with it no comfort to herself or those around her. It had for her but protracted weariness, repinings, gloom and fears; for those who ministered to her, it brought weariness of soul and body, sorely-taxed patience, exhausting watchings and services. It was beautiful and rare to witness the patience and love of the strong man for the weak, exacting wife. Business was sacrificed whenever she felt as if she would a little prefer *his* attentions to those of some one else. Often, after successive nights of watching, if he availed himself of the proffered services of neighbors, that the family might rest, she would feel that they were cruel

thus to turn her over to the attentions of those who were far less agreeable than her own family.

Often would they be summoned from much-needed sleep, as *she* said, "to see her die." They would drag themselves up so wearily, and after an hour or two of nervous excitement, under the influence of a soporific, she would sleep, and the household would steal back to finish their interrupted slumbers. Distant and expensive luxuries were procured at great trouble, when she imagined she would relish them, frequently to be laid aside hardly tasted, while some other fancy found expression and was gratified in the same way.

But at length there came a night, when Death *was* the strange, dread guest of the household. There was no mistaking his mien or presence then. That indescribable hue, those dark, mysterious shadows, that the human face assumes *but once*, overspread that wasted but formerly beautiful countenance.

"Forgive me, beloved husband," she said "that I have requited your love and tenderness so poorly. Forgive me, all of you. I feel that I have been a tax and burthen to you, though you have tried not to have me feel it: but *do* sometimes try to think of me as I was before sickness made me what I am. God bless you all, for

your patience and love to me, and may He forgive me that I have honored Him no more in my sickness. O Henry, it is dark and I am afraid to go *alone*—but I *must*—farewell!” and the thin lips quivered and refused to utter more—the wasted hand clung convulsively to the husband, who had been her strength so long; a few expiring gasps, and the restless trembling heart had throbbed its last.

Slumber and *rest* settled upon the household—the first it had known uninterrupted for more than a year—and when the pressure of necessity was removed, nature would assert her claims. There was sadness and solemnity there also—the virtues and graces of the departed were remembered and her weaknesses and follies forgotten. Yet her long sickness had left many a sombre mark, some of which time never effaced.

The young and gentle girl, dependent upon her uncle for a home, had in her self-sacrificing affection and gratitude, greatly overtaxed her immature physical powers. She had lost sleep that her youth and powers of endurance could not spare with impunity. She had attended upon the invalid when every muscle and bodily power was wearied almost to utter exhaustion, because “her ways,” her aunt said, “were more agreeable to her than most other people’s.” Excitement and necessity had kept her up till

the one for whom she labored was gone, and then nature demanded a penalty for her outraged laws, and protracted sickness succeeded. When she rose from her sick-bed, it was to linger for a few months, a drooping invalid, with the hectic flush and racking cough, while consumption, with its ghostly finger, pointed her trembling steps to the grave of the *early dead*.

The husband, with a business almost ruined from irregularity and neglect, was forced for many months to confess himself an invalid. His excessive loss of sleep resulted in a disease of the eyes, that for a long time incapacitated them for any use, and at one time threatened him with fatal blindness.

Years after, when a confidential friend expressed surprise, that with his social and domestic qualities, he had never contracted a second marriage, he replied, "I have had my experience of the troubles of married life; and I never hear of sickness in a family but a cold chill creeps over me and I utter a thanksgiving that I have none for whom to feel anxious or distressed. It may seem cold and selfish, but I tell you, —, a man *may* take to himself *comfort* when he takes upon him the care of a family, and he *may* take upon himself more *trouble* than he knows how to bear."

Reader, which was the richest life, which the

most to be coveted death—the one whom the summons hence found in one of the lowly dwellings of earth, or the favored one of fortune? Which will you have for you and yours, the beauty and wealth the world can give, or that which will triumph over sickness and decay, and glow with richer luster under the discipline of sickness and the blight of suffering?

The one, perhaps, you may not be able to command. The other *can* be yours, and you may bequeath it as a precious legacy to your children. Sickness *will* come to the household—let the educators there, by example and precept, teach their dear ones how to meet it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FATAL ERROR.

“Now, as fond fathers,
Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch
Only to stick it in their children's sight,
For terror, not for use; in time the rod
Becomes more mocked than feared: so our decrees,
Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead;
And Liberty plucks Justice by the nose;
The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwarted
Goes all decorum.”

SHAKSPERE.

I WAS once a youthful guest, for some weeks, in a stately mansion where numerous little ones “clustered round the altar and the hearth.”

The character of the parents had been formed in the school of self-dependence and self-denial. Difficulties and necessities had developed their energies, and helped to make them what they were, leading, valuable members of society and of the church of Christ. There was perhaps a savor of worldliness in the surroundings and appliances of their home, but no one could commune with them in its retiracy, without perceiving that their hearts and their influence were with the cause of Christ and humanity. Their little, promising group, was the centre of their

fondest hopes, their brightest earthly anticipations. To have them form the most desirable characters—to make their home to them all it could be made—to realize in them their own high ideal of true manhood and womanhood, seemed to be their chief parental ambition.

The mother, before her marriage, had been noted as a teacher for her success in government. The father, in his bachelor days, had advanced a theory of domestic discipline so faultless, that his nephews and nieces had grown up to *consider* him the embodiment of all governmental wisdom, it was not strange then, that I looked on with a good degree of interest, to see how their family was trained.

As we were seated around an inviting breakfast-table, a few mornings after my arrival, little Lizzie, a black-eyed pet of three years, called for some article of food, which on account of indisposition, was refused her.

The child cried and insisted. The mother offered a substitute; but the child pushed it away, and passionately insisted upon what she wanted. The mother mildly refused, coaxed, and promised it some other day, while Lizzie screamed, kicked the table, and insisted upon it *then*.

The father looked disturbed, and remarked apologetically that it was her favorite article of

diet in which she had always been indulged, and that she was irritable from ill health, etc. At length he said to his wife, "Better give her a *little*, it will not hurt her half as much as it does to cry so." The mother evidently was longing to do so, but she was restrained and embarrassed by the presence of an elderly, clerical friend, who with myself, was a guest at the table; after a little hesitation, she replied to her husband, "No, not till she is pleasant, at least, and asks for it properly."

"Will Lizzie stop crying and ask for it properly?" said father. "Say please and look pleasantly," said mother. Anything to gain the end; so Lizzie looked and spake as desired, and a small portion of the food was transferred to her plate. It was soon devoured and the plate repassed, and the same process of discipline repeated. When she had in this way obtained all they *dared* to give her, she was removed from the table; a long contest then succeeded to subdue her will, or rather, the violent external expression of it.

The first symptoms of submission were received by the parents with joy, nor did they seem to *dare* press very decided tests, lest she should again rebel.

"Why do you have such food on the table when she is unable to eat it?" said Mr. S. "A

is too bad," his wife replied, "and I will not do so again—poor little thing, I was sorry I did not give her a little at first; but when I had once *refused*, I thought I must carry it out."

The clerical guest and myself were left alone in the room, he sat tapping his foot upon the carpet for some time, and seemed to be intently studying its colors and figures. At length he broke the silence, while a queer expressive smile overspread his face. "Well, here's another household where the children are never taught to *turn a short corner*. Mark my words, these children will *never* be able to come to the point of submission and obedience to God or their parents, without making a large circle. Why will parents not learn that the easiest and best way is to teach their children to turn a short corner, easily and gracefully!" He took his hat and went out of the house with the air of one thoroughly sick of such degenerated family government.

During my prolonged visit, I perceived that the scene at the breakfast-table was a fair illustration of the kind of authority exercised over the children of this family. One day was like unto another, and the *principle* upon which one child was managed when *ill*, the same as influenced the government of another in good health. The mother was a bond-slave to the

wills of her children, at the same time that she professed to have established wholesome authority over them. Her life was spent in parleying and coaxing, striving to avoid causes of irritation and getting along with their perverseness and self-will in the easiest and gentlest manner possible. When discipline *was* administered, the tests of submission were made as easy as possible and every thing was passed over in them which could with any shadow of propriety be overlooked.

The excessive tenderness of the mother perverted the exercise of a naturally-good judgment, and led her to falsify in her practice a good theory. She flattered herself that what she was to her children, they would be ; that her yielding, gentle, indulgent course, would produce in them the fruits of obedience and affection. She could have seen very readily in another mother, the sure tendency of the course she pursued, to foster selfishness and self-will, and that her theory and practice lacked the Bible element of *authority*.

Five years later, and I was again the guest of my friend, Mrs. S. A pair of bright eyes looked lovingly into my own. Lips from which the sun of life had scarce kissed the dew of infancy, called me "Mother." How I longed to know just *how* to guide those little feet! How I

yearned to discover *whose* theory was the best one! How eagerly I sought instruction, and the results of experience in family training, that I might learn to write truthfully and worthily upon that little spirit, a record for immortality.

I readily perceived that the daughters of my friend were refined and polished in their manners, and that they had cultivated good habits of system and order.

So far they did honor to their mother's training; I was solicitous to discover the results of their mother's softly dealing with their *wills*. Was the spirit of submission and deference to maternal wishes, expressed or *intimated*, at once their ornament and their strength? More beautiful, more becoming is this spirit in young ladyhood, than the costliest jewels in the gift of paternal love. I soon discovered what I feared in this particular.

Mrs. S.'s position as a mother was a no less difficult one, than when her children were younger. There were constant collisions between her will and theirs, which generally ended in their having their own way. The dresses they should wear, the company they should keep and the disposition of their time, were all matters upon which they chose to think for themselves, and do as they pleased, "and as other young people did."

Their mother wished to have her daughters find their chief pleasures at home or in benevolent efforts for others. She wanted them to cultivate a love of reading and study—to aim at strength and nobleness of character, and to consecrate the dew of their youth to the service of the Lord. Her desires and aims for them, were above and beyond the shallow pretensions of what is called “genteel life” and “society;” but she found every step had to be contested, if at all opposed to their inclinations. They had never learned the beauty of submission, without “answering again,” and it was not easy for them now to “turn short corners.”

God poured out his Spirit upon the church where their parents were connected, and many rejoiced in the new birth of their children. The daughters of Mrs. S. found it “*too hard to submit—they could not.*” Unlike their parents, “their Father in heaven” would not bring down *His* law and authority, half-way to their wills, therefore they pressed on in rebellion. Bitter tears their parents shed, to see them turn from a proffered Saviour to the love and service of the world, and much they wondered *why* the blessings of salvation descended not upon their household.

When the light of eternity illumines the dark histories of those who have gone from Christian

homes down to ruin and eternal death, methinks in many a burning line will parents trace a solution of the mystery—"Lost, *because never subdued.*" Oh! that they "were wise, that they understood this!"

Mrs. S. was never to realize her high ideal of womanhood in her daughters. They came upon the stage of life mere ordinary women, whose chief recommendation was a *genteel* deportment and education, good taste in dress—love of society and admiration, and an especial regard for their own comfort. Their mother stemmed the tide of worldliness, frivolity and fashion in vain. Her gentle influence presented an insufficient barrier to the aggressions of their unsanctified inclinations.

At the age of seventeen, the eldest daughter married a man, whose most attractive qualities were such as pertain to drawing-room life. I was a guest at the bridal. The mansion presented a brilliant festive scene, but I perceived that dark and ominous shadows rested upon the spirits of those parents.

Their eldest—the one around whose cradle, joys, hopes, and new, refined ambitions met and embraced, and such anticipations had their play as only the hearts of parents know as they watch the slumbers of their first-born; how had they hoped to have given to the service of humanity,

through her, something valuable, one of those noble women, who *make their mark* upon the circle where Providence casts their lot; one of those Christian women, who leave their foot-prints all along those quiet pathways, where earth's holy ones tread. Now, to see her ready to leave her childhood's home, to flutter a brief hour in the bewildering glare of fashion, linked to one whose tailor and dancing-master had done more for him than he had ever done for himself—then to feel that the probation thus thrown away, must be solemnly accounted for in that great reckoning day. Oh! the picture—the memories, were too painful. What wonder then, that when the guests had departed, and the lights were extinguished, those parents sought their chamber and poured out their grief as if in their home had been gathered a funeral throng?

After a few short years of unhappiness, this daughter returned to the parental roof. The mildew of sorrow and disappointment had fallen upon her youth, *irritating*, not softening her spirit. She levied a heavy tax upon the love and patience of her parents, till the grave closed upon her follies and her earthly sorrows.

Their only son, their *idol*, for whose education, pleasure and benefit, neither pains nor money were spared, was trained like the rest. He never felt the influence of a kind and gentle, yet

firm and unyielding authority. He was never taught with reference to parental requirements, "to turn a short corner." Alas! at the age of twenty-two, he did "turn a short corner" into a dishonored grave, a moral and physical wreck.

All too late, in the light of experience, those parents saw their fatal error. All too late they learned that it was a *false* tenderness which shielded children so carefully from all the irritations, privations and little disappointments of early life. Maturer years will always bring to such, abundant causes of irritation and trouble, while the habits are still unformed, and the character undisciplined to meet them with comfort and serenity.

While many wondered *why* the children of such good people, were no more valuable to society, the parents had studied out, in their closets and over their Bible, an answer to that oft-reiterated "*why*."

As they reviewed, by their deserted hearthstone, in the eventide of their life, their history as parents, "*deficient*" seemed inscribed on all that history, "deficient in a vital point."

Through that spacious but almost deserted mansion, there seemed to echo tones of reproachful sadness, tones that haunted them in hours of meditation and self-communing. Now they seemed to come up from the graves of those who

had died without God, or hope in his mercy—anon they seemed to be the foreboding sighs of those whose fleet probation was passing in the empty rounds of soulless fashion. Now would come trooping up in memory's shadow, the hopes, the *expectations*, that danced attendance upon the bounding steps of childhood, when the house rang with its merry laugh—and then would flit the spectral forms of those hopes, *blasted*, and the warm glowing light of their early surroundings, faded into the cold gray twilight of a sad and unfruitful experience.

Young mother, is your great life-work all before you? Study it well in all its bearings. Give to it the best strength of your intellect, and the tenderest outgoings of your love. Let neither cares, weariness nor discouragements ever cause tones of fretfulness or complaint to blight, like mildew, the moral sensitiveness of your children—but oh! never let a false tenderness, a moral indolence, nor the influence of false anti-bible theories, deter you from striving to establish habits of prompt, cheerful, implicit, unconditional obedience to parental authority. Teach them, and that early, “to *turn a short corner*.” Thus in the habitation, you call “home” may domestic, “*lights*” brighten and gladden the shadowy pathway of your earthly pilgrimage.

CHAPTER XIII.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

THE LETTER.

By a cheerful little fire, in a tastefully arranged and pleasant chamber of a fine New England mansion, sat a maiden of about twenty summers. It was a chilly evening in early autumn. Before the fire was drawn a table, upon which were scattered various conveniences for writing. A lengthy letter, in a bold business hand, was lying open beside a partly-written sheet, evidently in reply to it. In one hand the maiden held a pen with which she toyed, and executed various flourishes upon torn papers beside her unfinished letter, while upon the other she leaned a finely-developed head, whose luxuriant curls fell over and partially shaded a face, classical in its outlines and lovely in its expression. She had evidently encountered some vexatious obstacle to the plan of her thoughts—or rather to the expression of them on paper—judging from her troubled and dejected countenance.

A slight knock and the opening door aroused her from her thoughtful attitude, and looking up she encountered her mother's welcome face. She was passing her daughter's door, and had merely looked in for a moment to assure herself that she was not sitting in a cold room; but the traces of recent tears and the cloud that hung upon her child's usually sunny brow arrested her attention. Closing the door, she entered, and seating herself beside her daughter, tenderly inquired the cause of her sadness. "No bad news, I hope, in the letter you received to-day?"

The daughter shook her head despondingly, and placing the letter which lay upon the table in her mother's hand, with choking, half-articulate accents, said, "Please read it for yourself."

The mother ran her eye over the well-filled sheet, at first with a troubled look upon her own face, but evidently relieved as she proceeded. The daughter, meanwhile, had laid her head upon her mother's shoulder and, throwing off all restraint upon her feelings, was giving vent in an unsuppressed and hearty cry.

Weep, maiden, on that true sympathizing heart while thou canst—thou wilt never find a better place to shed thy tears! Many a time in after-life, in the experience of burdens outweighing all *anticipated* ones, you will long to be young again, and to unburden yourself and

weep on your mother's neck. Blessed are the *maidens* who have a mother's cheering, sustaining sympathy! And blessed are the *matrons* who can look back over a weary, lengthened way, if need be, to a day, when there was for them a mother who knew how to cheer, advise, sympathize and soothe! Verily, the *remembrance* shall bless them!

"*A good place to cry in!*"—it is often one of our needs, and there is many a woman who would carry her load of care more easily if she had sometimes "*a good place to cry in,*"—such a place as she had before she exchanged a mother's for a husband's home. Yes, there is many a tenderly-reared one, who finds no *good place* to weep, and though the tears *will* come, she can only brush them hastily away with the hardened hand of toil, as she hurries on her ceaseless round of care.

Think of it, ye husbands, who never bestow sympathy upon the wife, who before you took her from her early home, had a mother's heart to respond to all her griefs!—ye whose shoulders have never proved a good place for a wife to cry upon—that are better fitted for any yoke, than the burden of family grievances and sympathies!

When the mother had finished the perusal of the letter she laid it on the table, and putting her arm caressingly about her child, inquired

very quietly, "*Is that all?*" "I should think that was enough," was sobbed out in response.

An hour later, Mrs. Clark joined her family in the sitting-room, and Emily, locking the door after her mother's exit, fell upon her knees, her heart overflowing with a sense of mercies—returning thanks to the God of all grace and consolation for the blessing of such a mother—and imploring his guidance and strength for every responsibility and duty of life. Then she arose, serene as a summer's day after a refreshing shower, and with a firm hand and an unhesitating pen concluded her letter; then sought her pillow to dream of the sweets of sacrifice and service for others—feeling stronger as a woman and a Christian.

An extract from the letter, which seemed to have thus disturbed the maiden's equanimity, may gratify the curiosity of the reader, and serve an important purpose in the *denouement* of our story. It was dated from a distant city, and was penned by one to whom Emily Clark expected shortly to be united in marriage. * * *

"I feel an embarrassment in expressing to you some of my perplexities in planning for the future, and arranging for that *home* which I trust will soon receive you as its beloved mistress. Perhaps I have erred in not heretofore acquainting you more fully and definitely with the

circumstances of my family, and my own personal history in connection with them. I will give you a little glimpse at their past and present, and then be guided by your own feelings and judgment in my plans and decisions.

“My father died when I was a youth, and left my mother little of worldly goods, except our humble New England home and a few acres of land about it. One after another of a large family of children either preceded or followed him to the grave, till there were but two sisters, and a brother (who had for years been a hopeless invalid,) left beside myself. I was not so young when my father died, but that I had indulged *hopes*, as my father had formed *plans* of a *liberal education* for me. His death cut off such hopes, and made it necessary for me to apply myself to some money-making business with all diligence, in order that I might add to the support of my broken and invalid mother. This I was enabled to do, by securing a situation as a clerk in this city, through the kindness and interest of a friend of my deceased father. After the first year, I was able, by making my own accommodations exceedingly scant and ordinary, to contribute very essentially to their comfort at home. This I continued for several years, each year receiving some augmentation of my salary. But my situation was one every way

distasteful to me, and it taxed me physically beyond my strength. I longed to exchange it, but did not dare make another attempt; for I had no friends or acquaintances out of the establishment with which I was connected. I was a green country youth, whose wits had been sharpened by necessity, into some shrewdness in monetary matters, but unversed in the ways of society.

“At this stage of my affairs an opening presented itself for commencing a small business in connection with a long-trying and responsible friend of my employer, provided I could make myself master of a few hundred dollars. It was a promising opening, and such a one as would perhaps not present itself again for a long time, and I was very anxious to avail myself of it—but where was the money to be obtained? There was no one of whom I could ask a loan, and I could devise no way of securing it. But I revolved it continually, spending wakeful nights in futile efforts to plan some way for obtaining the requisite means. At length I asked a short leave of absence from my employer, and went home to consult with my mother and sisters. The result was, that my family unanimously offered me the homestead and all pertaining thereto, upon which to raise the money, very generously trusting *their all* to the chances of my success.

I accepted what they urged upon me, and it proved the nucleus of my present independence and prosperity. Success, however, did not come to me till after long and severe struggles, and I was often almost distracted by the fear that the *all*, even the roof to shelter my feeble mother, was in jeopardy. My oldest sister, who had previously contributed her quota to family necessities by the products of her needle, came to the city and presided over a very plain suit of rooms, which she made *home* to me, and where, for purposes of economy, the employees of my small establishment boarded. With her own hands she performed all the work of the family, exercising that true New England economy—the *making much of little*—and in various ways aiding me essentially in my struggles. This she continued till my youngest sister married, and leaving home, made her return necessary to care for our invalid mother and brother.

“Success has crowned my efforts. Pecuniary pressure and want are among the things that *were*. Society has thrown open her doors, and smilingly invites the *rich man* to enter her charmed circles. So long as he commands respect ‘on ‘Change,’ and wears broadcloth and fine linen, she generously ignores the circumstances of his early poverty and struggles. But enough of this—you see how much I feel obliged

to my mother and sister, above the common obligations of a son and brother. And now, they are delighted that I am to leave the long-tried ranks of bachelorhood and take to myself one whom they are ready to receive on my recommendation. But, contrary to any expectation of mine, they seem to expect, that when I am settled in a home of my own, occupying so large a house, too, as they know I have built, they, too, must find a home with me, at least for the coming winter. I never supposed their economical, unostentatious habits, so long fixed, would induce them to be *willing* to come to the city, excepting to serve me in some way. But sister writes that their physician strongly recommends a change from the country for the winter for the two invalids, and I perceive my sister feels that the change will be a most desirable one for her, for she is almost shut out from all social life by her care of these helpless ones, and as she still perseveringly insists upon doing her own work, despite my entreaties to the contrary, she has a good deal of care and confinement in cold weather. She has never yet been able to realize that I *can afford* really more expense than when I first commenced business. I have proposed remodeling and nicely fitting up the *old home* for them; but their hearts seem set upon sharing *our home* this winter. I would

cheerfully fit them up a comfortable house in the city near by us, but that would deeply grieve them, as they feel so identified with me, that to share my home is what they much desire. If I could feel that *your* comfort and anticipations would not be interfered with, I should be glad to gratify them. Whatever I do for my mother's comfort and gratification, I must do soon, for she is fast approaching the end of her earthly journey. She has been a *good* mother to me, but I fear she is so different from your own, in her ways of feeling and thinking that you may not find her altogether congenial.

"Her life has been one of sickness, care, and toil, and great and various disappointments. Without your mother's culture and early advantages, or her *suaviter in modo*, she has a large fund of practical good sense and kindness of heart. Sickness and age have rendered her somewhat peevish; but she still retains her desire to promote the comfort and welfare of her children.

"My sister, too, is not like your sisters—she has ever had to do with the *severely practical*, and is somewhat *set in her ways, angular*, and '*old maidish*'—but she has an appreciation of cultivation in others, and is at heart a sound-minded, thinking, high-principled New England country woman—who was *not young* ten years since. My brother has been a blighted one from

early boyhood, doomed to continual ills of body, and to sympathetic ills of mind.

"Thus at length, and I fear wearily, my dear Emily, have I spread out before you my circumstances. Were you not of that number who live not unto self, I should not venture to hint at such a proposition as this conveys; for though my sister would expect to assume all care of the invalids, and to render you any assistance in housekeeping that you wished, I yet know it must involve self-denial on your part to commence housekeeping with so large a family, and those in just such circumstances of age and health.

"I leave the decision respecting these arrangements to you. If you decide in favor of gratifying them, I shall esteem it a new and strong proof of affection to myself. If you decide, as *most* young ladies would, under similar circumstances, I shall cordially acquiesce, and make the best arrangements I can to satisfy and make them comfortable, and convince them that, in being blessed myself, I would not forget those who have ever made my interests their own."

This was the part of the letter that drew forth Emily's tears. To frame a suitable answer to it, was what so perplexed her. There was in its tone an implied tribute to her superiority to selfish considerations, which she felt she did not deserve, but which she would fain preserve in

the estimation of her affianced. There was also a sense of what was *right*, of what was *due*, from a son to an aged invalid mother; and conscience softly whispered, "How would you feel were it your own dear mother that wanted a home by your hearthstone?" But it was hard—oh! so hard, to give up her long-cherished plans and pictures of her home—to have her house filled up with those about whom she knew little, and whom, though she wished to treat kindly and love as her husband's relatives, she yet felt sure would not be quite congenial to her. Then she felt a timid shrinking from what she feared, in a daily and hourly inspection and criticism of her novitiate in housekeeping.

Added to all this, the experience of her elder sister, who had married a few years previous and gone to the home of her husband's family, suggested many doubts and fears which disturbed and harassed her. And so there was a *struggle*—one of those conflicts which, in our moral career, are ever and anon occurring, all unknown to those about us—whose results are noiseless victories, perceived only in their blessed fruits or disastrous defeats that dwarf and cripple our souls.

Christian principle, maternal culture and influence, and the grace of God prevailed—and Emily retired from this soul-conflict to her pillow that night—*victorious*.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

Continued.

EMILY'S HOME AND HOME FRIENDS.

WHILE Emily was writing her letter, and even after it was superscribed, sealed, and ready for the morning's mail, and she resting in untroubled slumber, there was a trio in the sitting-room below, engaged in a grave and somewhat warm discussion; and Emily seemed to be the theme of their discourse.

Before we enter into its spirit, let us glance a moment at this family circle of whom we write, and its surroundings.

A commodious and substantial house indicates the competence and good taste of its proprietor. Noble elms, and trees of varied foliage adorn the surrounding grounds. Well-stocked fruit-yards bespeak choice luxuries; while shrub, vine, and garden-walks combine to make the external aspect of the domain inviting.

The sitting-room, where Emily's father, mother, and maiden aunt are conversing, suggests the

cheerfulness and home-comfort, that pervade the whole house. Spacious, convenient, and well arranged—it is the family's favorite room, and justly so, for in it has been lived, the most free, warm, and glowing hours of their social life. Here the children have frolicked, while their elders have looked on and smiled, or joined the plays—for the father and mother of this family considered it no compromise of parental dignity to help the children in their sports, as well as to teach them sterner things. So there had been many a game of “blind man's buff” there, in which father and mother wore the “blinder,” regardless of the wear and tear of carpets—and its nooks and recesses had often witnessed the equally undignified “hide and seek,” played by children and adults.

By its fire-side, nuts had been cracked, stories told, lessons conned, and those instructions, admonitions, and sympathies bestowed, which permeated with their influence, all the after-life of the children reared there.

From its deep bay-windows, they had looked forth upon as fair and enticing a panorama of hill, dale, and far-off mountain peak, of stream, rock and verdant field, as well could charm the eye.

By those windows they had sat and mused, and dreamed bright day-dreams, as childhood glided

on to youth—and they had often in fancy roamed from thence beyond the hills that bounded home, into the great world that loomed, with its enchantments, in the distance.

It was a dear old room, teeming with rich, pleasant memories of genial sympathies, and noble teachings to those who had

“Clustered ’round its altar and its hearth.”

’Twas not a small group that had been wont to gather there. Ten children had grown up in that home, into fair and well-developed youth. Some had left it and gone forth to other homes, but they ever turned lovingly to the old one, that had cherished and encircled their childhood, and there were frequent and glad returnings and reunions.

But there were some of the once-happy group, whose vacant places were never filled; some were gone, who never returned. They had gone a returnless distance—had become inhabitants of a home, so far away, their coming was never looked for. Their names were spoken often, though in subdued and tender tones, and their vacant seats were always kept so, and their places in the family heart were evermore unfilled.

Emily, the heroine of our story, was the eldest of the four children still left at home. She was a

child of love, culture, and many graces, of person, mind and heart—in some respects, the choice one of the household darlings. She certainly was the especial favorite of her maiden aunt, whose name-sake she was ; and her father was fully persuaded, in his own mind, that he could never give his Emily away to any one who would not love, appreciate, and cherish her as tenderly as he did.

If her mother had not somewhat modified, by her wisdom of instruction and requirements, the excessive tenderness and indulgence of father and aunt, their pet might, perhaps, have never made the woman we shall contemplate, but have manifested the rather, a barren, warped, and selfish character. As it was, she possessed those elements of character which only awaited circumstances to combine and develop into one, strong, symmetrical, and noble, bringing forth precious fruits in the various relations of life, and ripening under its discipline for a glorious and immortal life beyond this.

Her father was a man of noble presence. There was latent fire in his handsome eyes, force and firmness of will, in the expression of his genial face. A glance at his physiognomy, and his commanding form, would impress the beholder with the conviction that his manhood was cast in no soft or petty mold—that what he willed or attempted, he expected would be accomplished.

Well was it for his family, that this firmness of will was combined with just and noble views of his relations to them—that his strength was for them to lean upon, not for purposes of tyranny and selfish supremacy.

As he turns his eye upon the wife who sits beside him, bending his ear attentively to her low, sweet tones, an observer recognizes an influence, potent to sway the strong man, and to which he has been loyal these many years. Since her eighteenth birth-day, she has sat by his hearthstone, walked with him the path of life, shared his sorrows, joys, plans, and hopes—and crowned his life with love and blessing. She was beautiful once—she is so still to him. Indeed, she is a beautiful specimen of graceful, green, and sunny life a little past meridian. There are no *wrinkles* on her face, because she *would not suffer them* to take up their abode there. Though she has reared a large family, and borne many cares, she is not care-worn, for she has found in her husband, such love, help, and strength, that the burthens of life have been well adjusted, and well sustained. Her husband pays her no less homage now, and defers no less flatteringly and tenderly to her opinions and wishes, than he did in the freshness of her youth and beauty.

What higher tribute can a wife receive—what

to be more earnestly sought and coveted by her, than this continued, unremitted love and respect from a husband, shining with increasing brightness, amid the gathering shadows of life's decline.

Whether he of whom I write, had a rare appreciation of a true woman, and understood better than do some of his sex, what is due a wife, who has devoted all her best years and energies to make his home a happy one, and his children an honor and comfort to him—or whether *his* wife was so rare a woman that he could not resist the potent spell her influence cast about him, I cannot say. But I do know, that theirs was one of those unions, presenting a picture of domestic life, beautiful, but all too rare, where early love augments, mellows, and ripens with advancing years, manifesting the perfectness of its fruits, and the most cultivated delicacy of its expression, after life's early bloom has faded, and gray hairs have supplanted the auburn locks of youth.

Their children were well trained, well educated, and though not faultless, they were valuable men and women. From their father, they had learned force of character, and a large-souled generosity. He had inspired his sons with a spirit of resolute manliness, and taught them nobleness, and strength of principle in the business affairs of life.

The mother, seconding all his teaching, supplied defects therein, and softened what needed softening by the outreaching of a gentle, genial piety. Hers was a "meek and quiet," not a tame or inert spirit, and in its habitual manifestations, as well as in her instructions to her family, she taught them to live for something higher than self; she taught them the application of principle to the intercourse and everyday occurrences of life. She inculcated both by precept and example, a beautiful thoughtfulness of others' comfort and others' rights, in small matters as well as in large ones.

There is one other member of this household whom we will introduce to the reader—the maiden aunt. She is a shrewd, stately-looking lady, of middle age, who from choice, not necessity, walks the path of life, bearing the name her father gave her, instead of merging it in another's. You can see by the expression of her eye, and the firm but good-humored set of the muscles about her very decided mouth, that she is sister to the family's lord, rather than to its gentle mistress. Possessed of a comfortable independence, generous and kind in her feelings, and efficient in all womanly ways of usefulness, she was a welcome inmate in the homes of all her brothers and sisters. But, while she gave a portion of her time to each, this brother's house

was the chosen place of her abode. Her feelings and interests were all identified with him and his, and she gave to his children, the care, interest, and love, that many a man had vainly sought to transfer to his own home.

Emily, her name-sake, was her especial favorite. True to her own ideal of life, she looked rather suspiciously upon the numerous suitors for her hand. Her favorite maxim was, that a woman should not marry unless she *bettered* herself. This bettering, she did not, in her own mind, apply exclusively, or even primarily to pecuniary bettering, but to whatever affected the comfort and happiness of life.

The scrutinizing look, and somewhat elevated eye-brows with which she scanned the features, and watched the demeanor of Henry Graham—Emily's affianced—betokened a mind not fully satisfied that her darling *was* going to "better herself," in an exchange of name and homes.

Shrewd, intelligent, and very independent and decided in her opinions, though kind and just withal, her influence was a strong one in her brother's family, and her opinions were seldom gainsaid by the affectionate, confiding Emily.

But when she attempted to warn E. against Henry G. and rather coaxingly said, "May as well wait a little longer, I am not sure you are going to better yourself." E. would shake

her curls, and laughingly tell her it was no use to wait, for she knew Aunt Emily would always find some objections to any one, and was afraid if she waited till *she* was suited, she would get to be quite a matured maiden.

We have thus given the reader a somewhat minute insight into Emily's early surroundings, that, as we progress in the narrative, the trials contrasts, self-discipline and self-sacrifice, it was hers to experience and exercise in acting her part in her other home and in new relations, may be appreciated.

Trials, experiences, conflicts and victories, to be judged of aright, and commented on with justice, should be considered in connection with individual temperament, circumstances, and habits of mind and life. What might not prove a trial at all to one, may be a sore one to another. Thus, our Heavenly Father, who knows us altogether, and is familiar with every secret peculiarity and susceptibility, knows also full well what discipline to appoint—in what school to place us.

So in our sympathies for others—in our efforts to do them good, the kind word, the considerate concession, the benevolent seeming blindness to a defect or peculiarity, or the bestowal of sympathy—sometimes when it is apparently almost repulsed, may be greater benefactions, truer

kindnesses, than any others within our power of bestowal.

Methinks there is no more beautiful aspect of the power of religion upon the character, than where it attempers the spirit to a meek forbearance with the *contrarities* of life, and enables it to meet gracefully and serenely, its irritations and distasteful annoyances—that teaches it to ignore self, and seek the good and comfort of others, where personal tastes, preferences, selfishness, or even strict *justice*, would dictate a different course.

There are many professing Christians who have religion enough to do *great things* for their Lord and Master, who have not enough to meet the *great little things* of every-day domestic life, in a way to honor Him and the power of His grace.

After all, the power of religion, and the great achievements of Christian culture, lie along those channels of every-day life, where the humblest and the most retired have hourly opportunities to show themselves “mightier than he who taketh a city.”

CHAPTER XV.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

Continued.

THE DISCUSSION.

THE reader has been introduced to the parents and aunt of Emily, as they were discussing her interests and prospects by the sitting-room fire-side. Let us return from our digression, to note the spirit of their discourse.

Mr. Clark is opening and closing that universal Yankee convenience—a pocket-knife, with a little wrinkle of annoyance upon his brow, while his wife communicates the contents of Emily's letter, and alludes to her disappointment of feeling, respecting her new home prospects for the winter, and E's fears that commencing housekeeping under such auspices, she shall be embarrassed and hampered. His face brightens, however, as she speaks of E.'s victory over her selfish feelings, and her resolution to act in the case, as she would wish another to do, if the comfort of her own beloved mother was dependent on such a decision.

"She's a noble girl!" he exclaimed, with a dash of parental pride. "Not a bit of selfishness about her; she's her mother's own child—is she not, wife?—hardly selfish enough to look out for herself and get along well in this selfish world. She needs a husband that will look out *for* her, and so does her mother.

"Wives that are looked out for like yours, my dear," said his wife, "have very little need to watch their own interests, closely. As to Emily's selfishness, I fear she has enough to prove the occasion of many sore conflicts, before the discipline of life is accomplished for her."

"But it is most too bad, for Graham to ask her to take in all his incongruous family, not as guests, but as inmates, for I perceive that this temporary arrangement is only, with them, the stepping stone to, or the commencement of, a permanent one," remarked the father.

"Well, what does it amount to, but that the one to whom Emily gives her best affections, has friends he loves, and who love him, and who would be happier by sharing his home and society?" replied Mrs. C. "They may prove E.'s best aids and comforts. They can but give scope to her heart and better nature, if she receives and cares for them, according to their claims and needs, rather than in a spirit of contracted selfishness."

"One would think you had forgotten that you had married one daughter to a half score of husband's relations, and the life she leads in consequence," chimed in Aunt Emily. She plied her knitting needles with increasing rapidity, and continued, in a very decided and expressive tone, to unburthen her mind of its load. "You are strange people, I think, to give your consent to any such arrangement. Do you wish to see your fairest, sweetest daughter, pressed into a life of just such domination and perplexity, as your eldest-born leads and writhes under—a slave to invalids and old people's caprices?"

"Not quite so bad as that, I trust," responds Mrs. C. "you allow Eliza's trials to make you morbidly sensitive, sister. Mr. Graham's letter, would certainly give us a very favorable impression of their character, and you must acknowledge it does credit to his own manliness and good feeling. Choosing selfishly, I would prefer Emily to start her married and housekeeping life more by herself. She will doubtless have her trials and annoyances, but they will not hurt her, if she meets them wisely and rightly, but her whole character may beautify and strengthen, even under *such* discipline."

"Just as Eliza's does under hers," replies Aunt E. rather tartly. *I don't fancy such kind of discipline. When she was married, she was one of*

the merriest, noblest, and happiest of girls. What is she now? Who would know her to be our Eliza of old?"

A shade of sadness passed over the gentle face of the mother, and a tear glistened in her eye, when she attempted a reply. "Emily will not take the same course Eliza has, even if she has the same circumstances to try her," she said. "With her the question is, 'What spirit and course of conduct does my Saviour require, under these circumstances?' With Eliza the question is, 'What is befitting the circumstances and relations in hand? What is just and equal—what am I bound, by comity and right, to render *you*? What is it *your* place to concede to me?' Emily can bend and fit into angles and uneven places—Eliza must lay equity to the line, and take propriety and self-respect for her plummet, in marking out her course in life."

"And so you will both of you, sit down and fold your hands, and let her be taken in a snare from which you will soon be unable to extricate her without family trials and dissensions, and feel easy about it, because she, poor child, has a meek, self-sacrificing spirit! I tell you I don't approve of it," and Aunt Emily's tones waxed excited. "I don't believe in this mixing up of families and different sorts of people—nothing but trouble ever comes of it. It's bad enough to

marry a husband, without marrying all his family relatives. I tell you it is not a wise way to do, and you will rue it, if you permit it."

Mrs. C. smiled—perhaps at the earnestness of her sister-in-law, perhaps at her forgetfulness of her own position and relations. If there had been none willing to live with relatives by marriage, Aunt Emily certainly would never have occupied the post of honor and influence she did in her brother's family.

"What can we do, sister," asked Mr. C. "but leave Emily to decide for herself, now at this late hour? The thing has gone too far to postpone the marriage; beside it is a delicate matter to object to a man's inviting his family friends to spend a winter with him, in his own home."

"But you know, brother, that is a mere farce, a kind of introduction. Where is your foresight? Don't you see this is but the commencement of an arrangement, that will only terminate with the life of those two invalids, leaving that sister a permanent fixture? Delicate or not delicate, *I* should object to any such arrangement *now*, while there is some use in it."

"If that sister, whose installation into the family you so much deplore, should prove another Aunt Emily, what then?" inquired her brother, rather mischievously. But Aunt E. was not to be turned from the main point.

"I am sure," she continued, "that they are very common, uncultivated people, not at all suited to our dear Emily's refined tastes, and that as they have had so much to do with Henry Graham's affairs and fortunes, they will feel privileged to dictate and meddle continually, and that before Emily has been married six months, she will wish as Eliza did, that she was back again in her old home."

Aunt Emily never allowed Eliza's fate to be long forgotten in the family. It was a striking illustration to her mind of the folly of girls getting married, unless they "bettered themselves." She had married a few years before, and taken up her abode, in the old home of her husband's mother and family, and she had found much that was embarrassing and uncongenial there. She was received more as a child there, to submit to time-honored and rigid unacceptable regulations, to which she had never been accustomed in her own home—to be dictated to, advised and watched over as an inexperienced young thing, who could not judge for herself—rather than as an independent married woman, the mistress of her own and her husband's home. Her highly-strung spirit rebelled at what she thought injustice and unauthorized dictation. She failed to realize her ideal of family beauty and comfort, and thus, though her husband was

a man of personal worth, she was a most unhappy wife, and wore a yoke that continually chafed her spirit.

Aunt Emily never returned from a short visit to her, but she gave vent to her indignation and dissatisfaction, and generally wound up by saying, "The other girls had better look before they leap."

She had thus come to consider it, almost a *sine qua non*, in the matrimonial arrangements of her nieces, that they should be domesticated by themselves, and not live with their husband's relatives—when, therefore, such an arrangement was proposed for her petted favorite, her apprehensions and a good deal of indignation were aroused.

It was late when our trio vacated the sitting-room and retired to their own chambers. The mother laid down with a prayer on her lips, that her child might live a true, unselfish life, and be equal to all she might have to meet; that she might perceive and perform all that devolved upon her in her new relationships, and be found faithful, even to the end.

The father went with a struggle in his own mind, between his sense of right and anxieties for his daughter's future ease and quiet of life. It was hard to give up his cherished darling,

even to another home the most favored in all its circumstances.

Aunt Emily laid her head upon her pillow, with her vigorous will arrayed against what she considered the immolation of her favorite upon the altar of sacrifice, and in no very amiable mood towards Emily's affianced, his friends, or even E.'s parents, for what she conceived their too easy acquiescence with an unreasonable requisition.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

Continued.

EMILY'S NEW HOME.

THE bride has gone from her early home, and the love that was there hers, to one strange and untried. Those she has left behind mourn her absence, and home presents more the aspect of a recent funeral than of a festal scene. Aunt Emily especially, takes deeply to heart this departure of her favorite, and going about the house as if she carried a heavy heart-load, she ever and anon shakes her head and ominously utters *sotto voce*, her well-worn, "Don't know as she has bettered herself, 'fraid she hasn't; a girl better look a good while before she leaves such a home as this."

Some tears and sadness mingled with the bride's adieus to that dear home and family circle, but hope whispered to her of another home and another fireside, with a new love to lighten it with its glances, and of frequent and

glad returns and reunions at the old one. The siren wove for her such fairy spells as she is wont to weave for young brides, gilding the future with pleasant colors. Care, anxiety, even sorrowful regrets at tender partings, thus nestled themselves quietly under the brooding wing of a great confidence and self-commitment to a new life and guidance.

How seldom does a bride leave her father's for another's home without these hopes and dreams to beautify the future! How seldom is the realization, what anticipation pictures beforehand.

A proud and happy man was Harry Graham, when he transferred Emily to his new home. We have seen from his letter to her at the commencement of our story, that he had made his own fortunes and worked his own way to his present position. Like almost all self-made men, he lacked, in some kinds of æsthetic culture, what he had acquired in force and strength of character. He was respected for his worth, benevolence and principles, but especially for his success in business, and had the *entree* to a large and desirable circle of society.

The home which he had prepared for Emily had been fitted up with taste and comfort, and he had, before her arrival, installed his sister and mother there, that everything might be arranged to add cheer to her welcome.

Emily, it must be confessed, would have preferred assuming her own position as mistress of the family first, and then welcoming her husband's relatives as guests and inmates of her new home. But she was too conscious of the motives of kindness which dictated such an arrangement, not to receive it in the same spirit.

Mr. Graham's relatives soon found their apprehensions of the fine lady, merging into love and admiration of the sweet and gentle woman who greeted them so cordially, and concerned herself so kindly for their comfort, placing them at once at their ease.

The mother felt as if a warm glow of summer sunshine was glancing upon her aged heart, softening the rigors of a stern and long-tried pilgrimage. The sister forgot the awkwardness and restraint engendered by her retired country life. Even the poor invalid brother seemed to brighten and gladden in the presence of a grace and polish he had feared would constrain him. What nobler opportunities can a cultivated and graceful woman have for the exercise of her gifts, than where she may adorn, comfort and lighten sad or weary hearts, and impart joy to those whose lot in life has debarred them the luxury of culture they have perhaps most coveted.

A few days this family had uninterruptedly to

themselves, before the influx of friends and acquaintances, with their congratulations and compliments. They were golden days to some of them, for Emily was for the time exclusively their own. She sang for them such strains of music as they were not wont to hear, and the hours flew by, filled up with social converse, the discussing of domestic arrangements, and the thousand-and-one nameless occupations of those who have to make acquaintance with each other and get settled and adjusted to new circumstances and habits of life. The two invalids soon had occasion to dismiss all jealous fears (if they had entertained any) that they would be thrust one side as if in the way; for the most quiet, cheerful apartments in the new home were freely appropriated to them, and by many a nameless and delicate token of respect and attention did Emily endeavor to make her husband's friends feel "at home." They were not demonstrative people and there was a certain reticence about the mother and sister that somewhat embarrassed and perplexed Emily, yet it was unmistakeable that they were gratified and happy, beyond their expectations, in Henry's wife, and that this was to them a home and companionship to cheer their future which had never before been theirs. Nor was it vanity in the young mistress of this household, that made her conscious that she

made them thus glad and happy—that told her she had it in her power to contribute to her husband's friends what heretofore they never had possessed—that she was adding to the happiness not only of him to whom she owed marriage-vows, but scattering flowers and making rough places smooth in the path of those who had for the most of life trodden a rough and thorny way. A noble purpose sprang up in Emily's soul, to supply to them what was lacking in their social life—to be to them, irrespective of her own convenience and tastes, all that they needed to find in the wife of a son and brother, who was their earthly all. Thus, with the opening of her marriage-life, did she experience a larger joy—her future was filled with nobler purposes than are theirs, who as *brides* expect and exact undivided attention from husband and friends, and for the brief, *brief* season of their bridal reign, enjoy immunity from self-denial and a consideration of others.

The influx of visitors and the invitations which succeeded these first quiet days, were a great annoyance to the mother, who knew little of the forms or demands of city society. She considered the time thus spent as well nigh wasted, and was sure there could be no system or good house-keeping in such a state of things. The brother, too, was disappointed and irritated that he could

see so little of Emily, for he had taken an excessive liking to her, and her presence and conversation seemed to exert a controlling influence over his nervous restlessness, to which he had for years been a stranger. His shattered body doomed him to a life of almost entire physical inactivity, but it was the abode of a mind of more than ordinary capacity and activity. He had been a voracious reader, and many a long night-watch of restlessness and pain had he whiled away with such books as he had access to, or with thinking, castle-building, and planning what others could, and he would like to achieve. But his reading, had much of it been desultory and unprofitable to moral discipline; his thinking had been morbid—unfruitful of self-control and quietness of spirit.

His mother's management of him from the early period of his illness, had constituted the one prominent weakness of her home arrangements. In other respects she had been remarkable for counseling with her judgment rather than her feelings, even to a degree that often condemned her to severe criticism. But with her poor unfortunate William, she was the weakly-indulgent mother, whose will, so resolute and persistent towards others, almost invariably bent unresistingly to his. Indeed she had for years seemed to gather all the womanly tenderness and weakness of her nature about his welfare, whims, and caprices.

Emily was quick to perceive that they were annoyed by the demands society made upon her, and the necessary innovations of city habits of life upon their long-accustomed country hours and habits. She did not say or feel (as some would), "These are *our* ways and habits, and if you do not like them, you are not obliged to endure them." But she strove to effect a compromise as much as possible between what was inconvenient and unacceptable to them on the one hand, and what she felt was requisite in her circumstances and position on the other. She had quick perceptions, and for one whose experience of life had been so much in the sunshine—she was an apt discerner of character. Her mother had taught her both by precept and example, that the finest and truest benevolence recognizes and adapts itself to the little preferences, comforts and conveniences of those around us—a kind of benevolence too much overlooked, and the absence of which causes three-fourths of the disquietudes and unhappiness of married life.

Emily was a beautiful reader—her perception of the sentiments she uttered and the disciplined intonations of her voice threw a fascination about everything she read. William loved to hear her, and would listen to and interest himself in a class of productions, when she read them to him, to

which he never had, and thought he never could apply himself alone. She took advantage of this and resolved upon an effort to interest his mind in subjects that would afford it healthful aliment, by pursuing a course of reading with him. This plan she carried into execution, with the few interruptions she could not avoid ; and those were the most happy and profitable of his own and his mother's hours, that found her in her neat morning dress in the mother's pleasant room, reading to these two—William reclining in his easy chair listening with deep earnestness—the mother in her rocking-chair plying her knitting-needles as she listened, ever and anon feasting her eyes upon the happy face of her son.

“What would I not give to read as you do, Emily !” he exclaimed one day. “I should feel that I was of some use in the world, at least to my mother and sister, for I could read to them when they are knitting and sewing—you make the dullest subjects interesting.”

“You need only to practice with patience and perseverance to excel,” she replied. “If you wish to try I will help you ;” and from that time for many months she spent an hour with him each morning, teaching him expression, inflection, and the various exercises that make the finished elocutionist—an hour it was, redeemed from her own pursuits, belonging to no claim but her own

convenience or profit, and it proved one fruitful of good to William, and not barren in discipline and moral culture to Emily.

This new aim was like a medicine to William, turning the morbid restlessness of a mind left to prey upon its own ills, into a healthful channel. Other occupations and acquirements were devised for him by Emily—indeed she became his teacher and physician.

But with the selfishness and exaction which is, perhaps, a peculiar temptation of invalid life, he soon began to feel that it was his *right* to have more and more of Emily's time and attention, and that he was wronged and had occasion for complaint if she were absent or for any cause omitted or curtailed hours usually devoted to him. He even began to exact personal services from her, which his mother and sister had been wont to bestow upon him, because her manner of service was new and more agreeable.

His mother felt whatever affected William, and was annoyed when he was. Moreover, she found it hard to submit to different hours and modes of domestic arrangement than those in which she had lived and grown old. She had always managed for her family and dictated to them, even after failing health rendered her unable to labor much. Circumstances had always made it necessary for her (before her son's bettered fortunes), to exercise

the most rigid economy. This had become so much a habit of mind and practice that no amount of wealth would at her age have influenced a change in her habits. First—fundamental of all domestic qualifications in her estimation—was *economy*. Abstract that from the housewife's qualities, and the whole domestic fabric was ready to fall in ruins. Economy, estimated from her standpoint, would have been absolute meanness and parsimony from Emily's, who had never learned in so rigid a school as her mother-in-law, though she had been taught the sinfulness of waste. But the domestic arrangements of her home we have seen were on a generous and labor-saving scale. Meanness, Emily abhorred and everything that savored of it—self-denial she could understand and practice, but an illiberal penny-saving system of dealing with tradespeople and domestic employees was not in her nature, nor had she learned it in her habits of life; moreover she had learned to set an estimate on time, for purposes of personal culture or benevolent effort, above the slight saving of money which that time spent as the mother would have spent it, might secure. Economy in old Mrs. Graham's circumstances had been a virtue—the same system of management in Emily's would have savored of vice.

The husband and son at first looked on with

some little solicitude to see how the elements in his home would harmonize, but soon perceiving that all was well, he divided his attention between his business and family, troubling himself little to look below the surface, so long as that surface presented no forbidding aspect.

His mother acquired, in her long widowhood and with the sole charge of her family, those habits of dictation which were well nigh as supreme as her habits of economy. Her son had an easy, pleasant way of nominally deferring to it, and still pursuing his own course. He was, from nature and habit, a philosopher—but Emily could not, with comfort to herself, neglect to heed her mother-in-law's oft-reiterated, "Why *don't* you do so?" and "Why *do* you allow this?" even when she could, with as little comfort to herself, relinquish her own way for the more obsolete one of the mother.

Thus, the reader perceives there were in this family elements which might, under unwise administration, make it a home of petty annoyances, endless bickerings, and continual discomforts, jealousies and strife. Still there was a field for all to make moral attainments—an opportunity for harmonizing and modifying conflicting characteristics and merging the grosser elements of strife into the nobler ones of concession, self-denial and harmony. And it was an opportunity

for those noiseless achievements on the part of the young bride, which in the sight of God, were of more magnitude than the chronicled deeds of many a great one among men.

To most women how rarely occurs the opportunity of accomplishing great things, or making great conquests, as the on-looking world estimates greatness! But in every relation of life, and in almost every day's and hour's experience, there are laid in her pathway little crosses to take up and bear—little lessons to learn of patience and forbearance—little sacrifices which may seem as nothing to the looker-on, but which from peculiarity of temperament, may in reality be costly ones—little victories over nameless developments of selfishness, which perhaps only God and conscience pronounced selfishness—the culture of many a little hope, feeling, principle—the suppression of desires, repinings, or exactions, which make the feeble woman sometimes great and strong.

To the most of women, the great warfare of this probationary life must be a warfare known best by its results at home—the enemies they would vanquish meet them in the hidden nooks of every-day life, and the victories they gain in the warfare, are recorded not on the scroll of earthly fame, but by the recording angel in God's book on high.

Then how greatly important is each day's result in this discipline of domestic life, if there it is we are to achieve holy victories and then to receive the plaudit, "Well done!"—or at the last to find inscribed upon our course, "*Defeat—failure—irretrievable loss.*"

CHAPTER XVII.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

Continued.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

"WHEN, I wonder, is Emily ever going to get time to do her knitting and sewing, and to 'tend to her house-work, at this rate?" would old Mrs. Graham ever and anon inquire of her daughter Laura. "I don't *approve* of these new kinds of ways at all—it's not the way I began housekeeping!" Laura would reply, by assuring her there was no occasion to borrow trouble or anxiety on the subject; that Henry did not wish, nor did his circumstances render it necessary, that Emily should confine herself to the productive and economic industry of a housekeeper, as *she* had been obliged to in her married life. "Henry is able, mother, to afford his wife an easier and more intellectual life than we have had, and let us be glad of it, and enjoy what he provides for her and for us all. I am sure we have had enough of the drudgery of life, its cramping cares and anxieties, to suffice for

one generation—let us accept a change with thankfulness.”

“But I don’t *believe* in this way of beginning—they can’t hold out so. I tell you, every married woman has got to come into the harness first or last, or the husband will go to ruin, and they will be good-for-nothing wives, This visiting, and having so much company, and going to so many meetings, and all these benevolent societies, will never do—in *my opinion* a woman can’t ’tend to her family and all this to—‘charity begins at home,’ the good book says.”

“Well, well, mother, don’t worry so; Henry knows what he is about and it is not our place to dictate; he can *afford* to live as he pleases.”

“But I can’t help worrying, for I know he can’t afford it. He’ll come to poverty before he knows it, and Emily will be *spoilt*; and when he is poor, what kind of a wife will she be to help him along?”

“When he comes to poverty, Emily will be as practical as she needs to be. She is a true woman, and will be found true in all circumstances, I have no doubt.”

Laura tried, in these frequent discussions, to quiet her mother, who could not divest herself of her long-cherished views of domestic expenditure and management. She pointed her to the wide field of usefulness and influence in which

Emily moved, and tried to convince her that she was not spending her time in pursuit of pleasure and personal gratification, but in doing good and aiding in good causes, where those less favored of fortune or more confined and burdened with domestic cares could not.

Laura tried to act and *be* the candid philosopher. She resolved, when she first came into her brother's family, to suppress all envyings and repinings at E.'s superior culture, and avail herself of all the sources of improvement at her command—yet she sometimes found it difficult to suppress a rising emotion of bitterness and regret that her life had been so exclusively developed under the stern influences of necessity and toil, as she beheld the attractions and influence for good with which Emily's culture of mind and manners endowed her.

The winter wore or rather fled away. To Emily it was one of pleasant activity in the various new scenes and relations in which she found herself. She had her little conflicts and secret trials, but young as she was, she was too wise a moral warrior to permit her contests and skirmishes to be carried on *without* the walls of the citadel; but she made her own heart—her inner self—the battle-ground, and sought hidden help, even for her little disquietudes and temptations; and she generally came off victorious.

To her mother-in-law, she was invariably kind and respectful, deferring to her wishes and conforming to her ways whenever she consistently could, and when she could not, attempering her refusals with those gentle manners and excuses which sometimes make a refusal more valued than are some modes of compliance with a request.

If she ever felt her own tastes and preferences outraged, or found herself tempted to institute unfavorable comparisons between her own and her husband's mother, they were silent, mental processes, of which not even her husband was cognizant.

William had become her especial charge. There was little done for him but by her or under her direct supervision. Laura had gradually and almost imperceptibly assumed the direction of domestic and household affairs, and seemed to consider it but a division of labor to leave the care of Emily to William. Mr. Graham did not intend E. should be thus burthened, but not hearing any complaints, did not trouble himself to interfere with what seemed to him the natural course of events. Emily would have prized much an occasional word of encouragement or sympathy, in the little annoyances and trials to her patience which she daily encountered. She sometimes longed

for a recognition from her husband, of his consciousness that, out of love to him, she was cumbering herself with cares, which he told her before their marriage he would never suffer her to assume. Indeed, it must be confessed, that E.'s strong love of her husband's approbation and her wish to please him, had stimulated her much in the *commencement* of her self-imposed tasks with the capricious and suffering William—and that the little unnameable disappointments her heart experienced in this respect, entered into the gentle but varied discipline of this her early married life. But Mr. G. was not unlike many another energetic man of business, whose indolence has its exercise in shunning the unpleasant things, and trifling exertions and difficulties at home; while in the range of business activity—in the pursuit of money-making—it is a light thing even to level mountains, should they present themselves as obstacles in the way.

The mother and sister objected at first to E.'s proffers of personal service to the invalid, but they seemed at length to take them as a matter of course. The mother truly believed her son's wife could not be so well employed as in contributing to William's comfort, and Laura was well convinced that she could manage household interests better than the inexperienced Emily, while it was a great relief to throw off

the care of the capricious invalid, upon one whose skill, she was free to confess, was superior to her own in that department.

A division of labor was in fact quite necessary before the close of winter, for one domestic had been dismissed to please the mother, who constantly tormented herself with anxieties about Henry's extravagance and his impending ruin. Of course, in a large house with two invalids to receive extra attentions, and a good deal of company, there was a necessity for no little assistance, unless the remaining domestic was overtaxed. This made large drafts upon E.'s time, and it was chiefly upon those portions of it which she had consecrated to study and reading. It cost her also a sacrifice of judgment and of comfort which she felt was unnecessary, but which was nevertheless of smaller account than her mother's peace of mind, or the peace and quietness of the family. She felt that while Providence placed it within her power, it was right for her to retain such an acquaintance with the literature of the day as was profitable to her mental health, and that it was wise, right and benevolent for her to employ all the domestic help she needed—thus furnishing the means of a livelihood and a Christian home to the needy, and giving her time to do more good, and leisure for more vigorous self-improvement. Her youth

and inexperience in dealing with such peculiarities, made her feel that it was wise and best to err on the side of compliance, rather than the strenuous exaction of her own rights.

With a vague expectation or *hope* that summer would find her the mistress of her own home, and her husband's friends happily domesticated in their country retreat, she cheerfully pursued the course she had commenced, finding in the sunshine of her own glad spirit, more cause for thanksgiving than for complaint.

The first warm days of summer found them on the wing for the country, Henry accompanying them. Emily for the first time since her marriage, found herself alone, the sole mistress of her home. She occupied the few days of her husband's absence, in arrangements for her own system of housekeeping, and in preparing some little surprises for him in the exhibition of her own skill, as she had never before had the opportunity of exercising it without subjecting herself, in her own sensitive apprehension, to the mental or expressed criticisms of her more experienced and practical sister-in-law.

They had intended closing their house soon after Henry's return, and journeying for some weeks, but E. found her new situation so delightful that she entreated her husband to alter his arrangements and stay at home, which he

willingly did. They only paid a short visit to to the *old home*, and for the rest of the summer, the *new* one was vocal with the glad voice of its young mistress, who made rapid improvement in her domestic management, and quite astonished her husband by her good housekeeping.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

Continued.

CONFLICTS AND VICTORIES.

"We dwell with fears on either hand,
Within, a deadly strife,
And spectral problems waiting stand
Before the gates of life.

"Unharm'd, from change to change we glide,
We fall, as in our dreams;
The far-off terror, at our side
A smiling angel seems."

THAT summer-time flew by on glad and speedy wing to Emily. She was astonished at its lapse when her husband told her, one morning at the breakfast-table, that his mother was becoming rather impatient to return to the city. "Indeed," he added to his communication, "she is almost sorry she left at all; the season has proved so cold and damp in the country, and William is pining to hear your voice again. Laura says she never knew the country so dull and tedious before. I suspect, however, it is not so much the city as my little wife, that constitutes the attrac-

tion to them—my little wife, who makes sunshine and cheer for us all.”

Emily dearly loved approbation—her love of it she was obliged to guard as a weak point in her character. She could accomplish with ease, hard things under its stimulus, and overcome difficulties, especially if this approbation came from those she loved, and she often found, to her own humbling of soul, that what she had flattered herself was devotion to the right, flagged and waned when the incitement of human approbation was withdrawn. But in this case, approbation did not keep back the tears and disappointment that overflowed her eyes and choked her utterance.

Somehow the return of the family was to her imagination like some undefined shadow, darkening the little plans and prospects she had in view, and bringing instantly to her vision, thoughts of care and anxieties of heart, from which for a time she had experienced a delightful freedom.

There was a long visit from dear father and mother, that had been delayed till the heated atmosphere of the city had become moderated by autumn breezes. And there was a long visit, or rather *stay*, from Aunt Emily, whom she felt she could so much more easily entertain if she were all by herself. There were also expected visits from brothers, sisters and old school-mates,

which she knew would absorb her time and attention, even to the wounding of William's and his mother's feelings were they there, and it seemed to her that she would almost rather forego the pleasure of these respective visits from her friends, than encounter that of which she had a vague dread, if her husband's friends were there also. She feared her parents and family friends would see characteristics and peculiarities in her husband's relations that would repel and blind them to their true excellences, engendering in them fears for her own domestic comfort. She dreaded Aunt Emily's strictures upon "husband's relatives," and she dreaded, in the contact of uncongenial elements in her home for weeks together, mutual irritations and offenses.

Her husband saw the gathering tear-drops that refused suppression, and with some surprise exclaimed, "Why, wife, what *is* the matter? Don't you want the family back? Do you not find them agreeable?" Emily could not answer him, and he looked perplexed and annoyed. "I thought you all agreed nicely and were mutual helps to each other—at least I did not suppose you could get along very well without Laura in your housekeeping through the coming winter."

Now Emily did not exactly like to tell her husband how darling a scheme it was with her to retain Aunt Emily there through the season

of retirement and sickness in anticipation. She *felt* how much her aunt could administer to her own comfort, and she *knew*, with her positive ways and modern notions, she would not fuse with those of equally-decided but more contracted and antiquated ideas of things. She knew if she mentioned this scheme to her husband, that he would say at once, "Have her here, by all means—there is room for *all*."

Well as she loved her aunt, and accustomed as she was to her ways and to receiving indulgence at her hand, she felt that if her husband's family were to return, she must dispense with a winter from her, as her presence under such circumstances would occasion more care and anxiety to keep all elements harmonious, than would her absence discomfort.

A silent premonition seemed to haunt her, that if they returned as proposed, her home must henceforth be a *visiting place* only for *her* relatives—a *permanent home* for her *husband's*.

She felt that all the further ordering of her domestic life depended on the step taken now. She knew Aunt Emily would say, "Now is the time to be decided, and have the moral courage to let your husband and his friends know that you would prefer not to share your home with others. Divide, if need be, your last dollar with them, visit them, have them visit you, bestow

upon them all kindness and attentions—but reserve to yourself the freedom of your own home—be you its *sole* mistress. It were better thus for all; for your husband, yourself, and, in the end for them also.”

But there was an inner voice that spoke a language to her heart at variance with this practical, just, common-sense view of the matter. It whispered that her mission as a wife was not alone to make her husband and self comfortable—to enjoy her home and domestic life, to make love, home, influence, pecuniary independence, cultivated powers and social graces concentrated, conduce to the attractions of a domestic life in which she might shine sole and supreme, the one object of care and attention, the unmolested and only mistress. Nor yet were all these good things given her that she might do good on some large and public scale alone, or to those round about and without her, who might need or crave her sympathy or aid; nor even in those more palpable, agreeable or easier ways of doing good and communicating, that each day presented her, and which many consider the sum total of human claims upon their benevolence. This whispering monitor suggested many considerations that had more influence upon her heart-convictions, than she could have expressed in words. What could she do to promote the good and happiness of

others, that would equal her power to accomplish in this proffered family arrangement?

Was it not *right*, that the pleasant, comfortable home God had given her, should shed its cheering and rest upon the evening of *her* life, who had borne, nurtured, loved and labored for him whose wife she was? If that was the home and the spot of her choice, why should not she, who had borne the heat and burden of a weary day, sit down in it, to a bright and tranquil evening? Her *own* friends did not need it; Providence had given to them all their hearts desired, in home-ties and social blessings. Her *husband's* had but this one son and brother—but this one stay and support. Were they her own friends, under such circumstances, what would be her decision—what her course?

Thus Emily's mind was tossed and perplexed—conscience and her benevolent feelings prompting her to cordially share her home and bestow her care where it was desired—her own selfish preferences and prudence of judgment suggesting that she decline decidedly living as she had done.

An undecided mind is more or less in shadows, and for some days Emily walked amid them, haunted by spectral apprehensions for the future, and annoyed by vacillating and conflicting purposes, with a strange unrest of spirit. It was one of those little skirmishes in the moral

warfare, which tell upon the life's history even when no human mind is cognisant of it—God notes it—His angel records the victory or the defeat.

It was in this state of mind that, a few days after, Emily accompanied her husband on a short visit to his friends in their country-home. There, in view of the bitter disappointment she saw they would experience, if she did not—and of the comfort she saw she could impart to them all, if she did—she listened to the “still small voice” within her soul, that re-echoed her mother's lessons of every-day home benevolence, and proffered them a share in her home, care, love, and sympathies.

And she resolved to cultivate so much unselfish love for them, and to so adapt herself to their wants and social needs, that there should be harmony and sunshine in the home and mutual aids in its duties—and then the hills of difficulty that had loomed so forbiddingly to the imagination, dwindled away—spectral fears and anxieties fled.

Winter found them all in their old quarters, pursuing much their old round of occupation. Emily made herself happy and useful in an unselfish life of thought and achievement for others' good. She had her conflicts—she gained many victories. She imparted good and was blessed in

so doing. She gleaned good from those with whom she lived, and was a stronger, nobler woman for this contact with other elements of life and character than those to which she had been accustomed. She seemed to be the one need of this family, which Providence had especially chosen for them; in the enjoyment of this blessing, the aged mother rejoiced, softened and warmed. William, though still a tax and trial, in many respects, seemed to live a new life, and to have passed into a new world of activities, hopes and sympathies. He was learning from E. to think less about himself, and to try to do something for others, and Laura—the precise, rigid woman, who had a large heart and noble virtues under her somewhat repulsive manners—was learning to “blossom out,” and to receive in exchange for her expressed sympathies and good-will, corresponding expressions from those around her, which cheered and gladdened her life, and met a hitherto-unsatisfied longing of her reserved nature. Some writer has remarked that “the greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies.” And Emily here proved herself an artist, and enjoyed an artist’s meed. Not that her work brought with it no trials—no discipline. Not that the way was always smooth, and the heart always light—not

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that those who lived with her, did not sometimes have their own trials of spirit and ungratified preferences; but there was harmony, there was love, a love that daily strengthened—there was a conformity and adaptation to those who lived with her, and a sacrifice for their pleasure and their good, which dignified, disciplined and adorned Emily's character, and gave her a consciousness of the accomplishment of good, that was to her a daily reward and solace.

And as she went on, from month to month, in her work, she learned a lesson which most wives need to learn, and which, when once mastered, is a quietus to many a painful struggle in a loving heart—it was, to rest satisfied with a consciousness of having done right, of having sought and accomplished a husband's good, and gratified his wishes, without the immediate reward of his expressed sympathy and approbation—without any tangible token of his appreciation and gratitude. Emily's husband did appreciate all she did in the aggregate, but like the most of his sex, he did not understand or notice the little things of every-day life that bear upon a woman's domestic comfort, and he could not give the sympathy she often craved, from the fact that he was ignorant of any cause for sympathy; moreover his temperament and home training tended to make him sparing in his

expressions of approbation on all occasions. But he loved and valued his wife, and was filled with a great but quiet joy when he contemplated his domestic blessings. Emily was more happy and quiet in spirit, when she learned to rest upon her husband's love, and "take for granted" his approbation, going quietly on her way, seeking her best sustaining sympathy from "Him who giveth" to all his beloved, "liberally and unbraideth not."

Old Mrs. G. worried and fretted some—it was to be expected—yet in her heart she thanked God for making her last days her best ones.

E. learned from her, many lessons that were of practical value and which were as volumes of experience to her in after-years and in other circumstances. She learned to love and value her mother-in-law for her many virtues, and to feel tender sympathy for her as she unfolded the history of her life, and her hard lessons in the school of experience—and she gained new views from her and Laura, which added elements of strength, fortitude, and a practical efficiency, to the refinement and gentleness of her own character, and which endowed her more amply for the work of life. Years after, when that sometimes querulous though motherly voice was hushed in silence, and that aged, care-bowed form had been laid to its grave-rest, would the

lessons E. had learned of her, the suggestions and advice she had given her, perhaps unwelcome at the time, come back to memory, bright with wisdom and profit. And they were more heeded and valued in the maturity of her experience and when the day of pecuniary reverses came, than when they were uttered.

She felt in after-years that her early married life had been just such a school as she needed to have learned in, and blessed God for what she had learned, as well as for having granted her the privilege and given her the disposition to cheer and bless the declining days of one who had been chastened yet was beloved of her God.

Verily "all things shall work together for good to those" who love and trust their Saviour and God, committing to Him the direction of all their ways, and seeking to do those things well-pleasing in His sight.

CHAPTER XIX.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

Continued.

EMILY'S SICKNESS.

A SLIGHT, a single glance,
And that at random, often has brought home
A sudden fever to the throbbing heart.

YOUNG.

WINTER passed and spring-time came with leaf and bud; the streets of the city were thronged with busy, animated multitudes, but Emily was not among them—her place was in the secluded chamber of sickness, and beside her was a tiny being who had come to claim her care, to open hitherto-sealed fountains in her heart, and teach her new and wondrous lessons in the school of life.

But severe sickness and long prostration succeeded its advent, and the beloved one, for a time, seemed hastening to the grave.

Had Emily known the agony that bowed that household, she would have seen how strong were their affections, and have understood how little

their somewhat cold and undemonstrative exterior expressed their depth of feeling for her.

Father, mother and Aunt E., came to watch and succor the invalid, and all hearts in that home were united in anxieties and prayers for Emily's life and health, and each one's personal peculiarities lost sight of in the one common object of solicitude. When the danger was passed, the father and mother returned to their home, leaving Aunt Emily to nurse and guard the convalescent mother and the feeble, tender infant. Aunt E. could not trust her to hired nursing; in her devotion to her she would, if possible, have borne all her new cares and removed all her old ones too. Emily needed cheering and strength, for an unaccustomed feebleness of body and a sympathetic one of mind often overpowered her, and the sensitive nerves were attuned to suffering, if only the outcry of the infant aroused her from needed slumbers, or if she saw the slightest shade of variance between her aunt and mother-in-law or sister.

There were new elements in her home to be harmonized, new cares to be met, a new life to cherish, and no love or kindness could remove or lift the load of care entirely from her heart, even when she lay passive on the bed. In those weeks of feebleness she conned some of the difficult lessons of woman's life. She saw that Aunt

Emily did not approve of many things in her domestic arrangement and position. She knew she did not speak to her about them or give her the opportunity to defend them, from fear of worrying her in her feeble state. She saw that her aunt was more selfish and watchful for her, than she would be for herself in the same position, and she longed to make her see the excellences of character her new friends possessed, and the *light side* and *duty side* of her domestic life, but she felt too weak for argument or controversy.

"Where *did* those old-fashioned baby-clothes come from?" her aunt inquired one day, as she brought from the depository of the infant wardrobe, some garments in the style of two or three generations back. "Who gave them to you, and why do you want them on the baby to-day?" "I made them," E. replied, "and I want them on to-day because it is a rainy one and I shall not be liable to calls, and it gratifies mother to see the baby wear them."

"*You* made them!—why, what *did* you make such ancient-looking things for, and where did you get your patterns?"

"I made them after Mother Graham's directions, and to gratify her," Emily replied.

"Did she ask or expect you to do so?" "Not exactly," E. replied, while a slight blush overspread her pale face; "but she has a particular

dislike for the present fashion of infants' dresses, and I saw it would be such a pleasure, to her, to see the baby sometimes dressed according to her notions, that I prepared some suits in this way, and intend to select frequent opportunities to gratify her by robing baby in them."

"You had better begin as you can hold out, and if you are not, and *cannot* be, mistress of your own *house*, you had better take and keep the control of your own *child*," was Aunt E.'s reply, with a very decided and ominous shake of the head. "Remember your poor sister, and don't give up all your independence, but do as you please. I see how it is, you are in constant bondage, and making constant efforts to please and humor those, who, *I* think, had better have remained in their own home, where they could have had their own ways all to themselves without molesting others."

"It is a slight thing, Aunt E., to yield a little to an old lady's fancies, I think; and you are too kind to refuse to do it yourself, where you saw it would give so much pleasure."

"It is not the mere item of yielding about the child's wardrobe that I care for, but the *principle*. Are you here an *independent, married woman*, to please and obey your husband and order your family, or are you here a *child*, to be watched, ordered and instructed?"

"We are none of us *independent*, dear aunt, and I trust I am here to do God's will and accomplish the errand for which he sent me here. I want to do *right*—not just as *I please*, but as will please Him who placed me here and gave me my responsibilities. I find it hard sometimes to do right; I lack courage, wisdom and strength, I need *help* rather than hindrance from you, dear aunt."

With tears choking her, Aunt E., muttered to herself, "She's most like an angel." Indeed she really thought her pet was almost too good and too choice for the rough realities of life, and that Mr. Graham and his family ought to manifest an abiding sense of their unworthiness and good fortune to possess such a treasure. The image of her other niece, wretched and disappointed in her home life, was ever before her in contemplating Emily's, and she was ready to look with a jealous eye upon marriage relatives, and to repel the least approach of interference or dictation on their part. "A women marries only her husband, she does not marry his family relatives, and she owes no obligations to them, only the courtesies and kindnesses of life," was her sentiment.


Aunt Emily's heart was swelling with a sense of Emily's goodness, and with some bitterness at those circumstances which she felt tried it, when the mother-in-law entered the room. She took

up the newly-washed and dressed baby, and bestowed upon it admiring and gratified looks.

"Well, Mrs. Graham," said Aunt E., "baby is robed in rather antique costume this morning; how do you like her looks?"

"She looks comfortable and nice, and as if she had a sensible mother," was the reply. "Those long dangling dresses are only in the way and are a waste of time and cloth. It seems as if people now-a-days tried to see how much time and expense they could put upon every thing they wear or make; and after all, they don't look half so well as they used to in old-fashioned times. People don't seem to have common-sense now."

It was too good an opportunity to express her own sentiments, and Aunt Emily could not let it slip; so despite her resolve that for Emily's sake she would be very conciliatory, she replied with some asperity, "I suppose each generation had better judge for itself what fashions it will wear. It is not obliged to confine itself to the customs of the preceding one, or to be dictated to by it, any more than were they who lived in it to follow the fashions of those who preceded them." "Well I don't think it is right to be so extravagant—it's ruining men in their business, and doing a deal of mischief in my opinion," replied the old lady.



"I think woman's extravagance is a kind of scape-goat for the men's, and my opinion is, that if no men were ruined excepting those ruined by women's extravagance, there would be comparatively few ruined men. The amount of it is, men build splendid stores and warehouses, extend their business beyond all the bounds of reason, speculate in lands, stocks and bonds, and then, when they fail, it must all be laid to woman's extravagance, because forsooth they put a few more yards of material in their garments than did their grandmothers, or do not spin and weave as they did. It's all *cant*, I tell you," and Aunt E. looked as if she did not intend to be driven from her position by any one.

The discussion continued for some time, with indications of warmth and feeling on both sides, till E.'s flushed cheeks indicated excitement and fatigue, when her aunt, with the authority of a nurse, intimated to Mrs. G. to retire, and ordered E. to bed.

As her mother's tottering steps left the room, E. felt that they bore from it a wounded spirit, and she strove in vain to quiet her nerves to rest and sleep. She had only obtained the semblance of slumber, when there was a tap at her door, and a request from William to be permitted to come in and chat with her for a while.

Wearied as was E., it would have been a relief

to have read to and thus entertained him for an hour, not only for his own sake, but for his mother's; but her aunt objected, feeling sure it would hurt her and that she needed rest—telling her it was quite preposterous for him to tax her so much when she was an invalid, that it was bad enough when she was well—that she must begin to give him less time and attention now she had a babe to care for.

Poor Aunt E. ! She meant to promote her darling's quiet and good, but she only added to her mental anxieties, so that when she returned to her home, leaving E. again well, much as she was missed by her niece in many respects, and gladly as she would have retained her longer, had she lived by herself, it was really a relief to be once more in her old position unobserved by the jealous, watchful love of her aunt, unmolested in her daily rounds of service and concession to the aged and the invalid. These two were neither reserved nor very mindful of E.'s feelings, in expressing their dislike for her aunt, and she saw that short visits and a limited intercourse between them would be the future dictate of wisdom.

CHAPTER XX.

LIVING WITH A HUSBAND'S RELATIONS.

THE POWER OF LOVE AND ITS REWARD.

"MIGHTIER far,
Than strength of nerve or sinew, or the sway
Of magic; potent over sun and star, is love—
Though his favorite seat be feeble woman's heart."

EMILY is well again, and busy with the new and old cares of life. Her mother-in-law has no complaints now to make of her absence from home-duties—for she has fallen into that too frequent extreme of young mothers—an almost exclusively in-door life. Her husband says he can hardly keep pace with her, when she does go out with him, such is her haste to get home, and often alleges that he is obliged to hold the pew-door in church, to keep her in during the services.

She has many lessons to learn—as have all young mothers—and wakeful nights, fretful infancy, and maternal anxiety, both legitimate and uncalled for, add years instead of months to her hitherto inexperienced youth. So the great expanding wealth and strength of maternal love, joy, and hope, enlarge the scope of her feelings and life, far beyond the precincts of nursery, or home—beyond the *now* of her baby's life, to the great hereafter of its destiny.

To have been a *mother*—to have loved, watched and cared for infancy, even for a few short months—is to have had a fountain of the

heart unsealed, an experience of the life developed, and a connecting link between woman's soul and the mysteries of this life and the future, that long years could not bestow upon her without.

Honorable among women, nor unobserved and unsympathized with by her Saviour and ministering spirit, is she who accepts from the Great Giver this solemn relationship, and hedges it about with His promises, His love and His strength.

Emily's love and care for her child, did not absorb her, so that William or his feeble mother were neglected, but her powers of nursing and cheering were in continual activity. The more she *did* for them, the more she *loved* them, and the less did their peculiarities disturb her tastes and feelings, or interfere with her comfort.

Laura seemed to consider her special department of labor to consist in a superintendence of household and culinary arrangements, and Emily wisely enough resigned it to her, considering that there was enough to occupy her otherwise, and that it was better there be no clashing in the domestic machinery.

There was not quite the air of taste and elegance about the table and the appointments of the home, that Emily, as its sole mistress, would have lent it; nor was there quite the freedom or attractiveness to friends and acquaintances; and there were more heart-cares, more self-denials, more judiciousness and thoughtfulness of everyday speech and deportment required at her hands—but there was good management, wholesome food, Christian economy, the enriching blessing of the Great Father, and peace and love in the home.

For what E. sacrificed in her young ideal of a

home and domestic life, she gained in largeness of soul—in beauty of moral proportions—in learning to love and bear, to perceive, appreciate, and execute those more delicate and difficult duties that, far more than her education or personal attractions, made her in her maturity, an uncommon, a *superior* woman.

And thus the years sped. Other little ones came to that home to be loved and cared for. Sickness, with its vicissitudes and heavy taxation, visited it. There were harsh, rough passages in their "psalm of life" there were gushes of joy and trills of delight. There were requiem notes when the buds of beauty withered and died—there were gladsome strains when they were given back from the grave's verge to life and love. Sometimes Emily's hands hung down in feebleness, or she was prostrated on a bed of languishing, and then it was that Laura was mother, nurse and housekeeper to the family.

Old Mrs. G. seemed to grow young instead of old, and there was a calm, mellow light gilding the even-tide of her life. William, too, clung to life with a tenacity that bade defiance to the inroads of disease, and he learned from year to year to live a nobler life. Emily's children and their patient mother were to him successful teachers.

Reverses came, and the hitherto rich and successful man found himself a *bankrupt*. But his poverty was not the result, as his mother had prognosticated, of his wife's extravagance or his family expenditures. He was ruined, as many a man is, by an almost insane desire to extend business, add to his already large possessions, and compete with his equally ambitious and enterprising fellows in the marts of trade. How frequently, in such instances, does society begin

to inveigh against the man's extravagant family, when his family expenditures are not a tithe to the losses, wastes and extravagances of his business. It looks at the tasteful, convenient, and perhaps unnecessarily adorned home, which cost its thousands—shakes its head, and “don't wonder he failed,” but passes unnoticed the splendid warehouse, or the magnificent store, which have swallowed up their hundreds of thousands, or only notices to wonder at, and admire the enterprise which led to their erection.

Emily bore reverses as a Christian woman should bear them. There were hard lessons given her to learn and she *tried* to learn them one by one, and she succeeded, till there was none who exceeded her in all housewifery economies or womanly ingenuities in making *the little* go as far and secure as much comfort, as *the much* had heretofore done. Then it was she found her husband's mother and sister efficient aids and comforts—indeed it often seemed as if she must have sunk under her cares, labors and perplexities, had it not been for the results of her mother-in-law's experience and Laura's practical efficiency.

Old Mrs. G. had numbered more than her “threescore-and-ten” when she finished her pilgrimage. Emily watched about her last sick-bed, sustained her dying head, and received from her, sweet words of gratitude and affection. And when that worn-out frame no longer required her services, nor the mind in its second childhood, her soothing or her care—the sweet consciousness of duty performed, God honored and pleased, and the weary pilgrim comforted and cheered, constituted an ample reward.

Nor would she have bartered the added richness to her life this experience had afforded her,

for all she might have gained by an exemption from the cares and self-denials it had brought her. It is the spirit and manner of our reception of the trials, difficulties and cares appointed us, that determine whether they bring us moral strength or weakness. Who cannot see that to some women, Emily's relations and circumstances would have been the occasion of fretfulness and selfishness of character, of continual irritations, bickerings and jealousies.

William lingered for some years after his mother—a tax and trial to the love and patience of his friends to the last. God left him among them till he had accomplished his mission, which seemed to be the trial of their patience and the developement of their benevolence and love. He died, having not only learned the way to Christ from E., but many lessons of moral culture and love, of which he might else have been in ignorance. With his last farewell to her, he mingled the expression of his hope that in the other and better home she had taught him to seek and love, he should ere long meet her who had been to him more than any other earthly friend.

While the little group who called her mother needed her most, Emily received her dismissal from cares and warfare here and went home to glory and rest. Think you, as she committed her children to Laura's care, she regretted that she had borne with Laura's peculiarities, and had not followed her own tastes and inclinations, or her Aunt Emily's advice, and shut out from her home, those whom she had cherished there?

She only regretted, dear reader, that there had not been a larger wealth of love—richer outflowings of sympathy and forbearance.

Her father and mother were dead—her Aunt

Emily was watching over a long-enfeebled sister, and Laura seemed to be God's especial providence for her bereft household. And well did she execute her trust—amply did she repay all Emily's forbearances with her, all her considerations for her, all her delicate and acceptable efforts for her culture and happiness. The home Emily left was well ordered, the husband and children well cared for, and when death, not long after, deprived Laura of a brother and the children of a father, she made them all her own, and lived and labored for them, with a rare, unselfish love. Her heart seemed to warm, soften, and expand with all womanly and maternal tenderness, and to repay its debt of gratitude for the brightening, cheering influences that had visited it, in munificence of love and care for the children of her who had been to her a sister and a friend.

Wife! Mother! Housekeeper! life will be to you—it *is* to you—what you make it. Is yours a poor, barren, contracted—a disquieted, complaining and sore-fretted life? Be you sure it is not the difficulties that beset you, nor the disappointments that attend your way, nor the hard things given you to do, that make it such. You *can* be great, strong, good, and true—your inner life may be beautiful and pure, and will be in proportion to the exercise and development of your moral powers in circumstances of difficulty and trial.

Blessed be God, He does not appoint us, perplexities, cares, or troubles, without bestowing with them means of culture, development and augmentation of our powers—the opportunity of beautifying of our souls, and of attaining a larger, richer experience in His school of life, that brings with it, even as we journey on, its own “*exceeding great reward.*”



